



FAMOUS
MONSTERS
#250
JUNE 2010

FAMOUS MONSTERS[®] OF FILMLAND



A SPECIAL ISSUE-LENGTH TRIBUTE TO
A FAMOUS MONSTER IN FILMLAND!



Look into my eyes! Deeper...deeper! You cannot resist! Your will is no longer your own! You shall take this magazine home and you will read it from cover to cover and you shall compel your friends to do the same! And when at last you have realized there is no escape, it will be too late! Like so many before you, you have fallen completely under the spell of the insidious DR. ACULA!
(Or words to that effect.)

FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND



A (MON)STAR IS BORN!

THEY SAID IT COULDN'T BE DONE! They said we couldn't build an entire issue around the acting career of a man who was never meant to act! They said there weren't enough pictures! They said there weren't enough good frame grabs! They said there weren't enough BAD frame grabs! But did we listen? NO! Should we have? POSSIBLY! But you only get one shot at your 250th issue! And if you should find when you reach the end of this magazine that we've left a bunch of blank pages...please keep it to yourself! WE certainly will!

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OUR COVER
You were expecting something else? The long awaited 250th issue of FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND is finally here - and look! It's in **COLOR**!

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FAMOUS MONSTERS[®] OF FILMLAND

A FAMOUS MONSTER IN FILMLAND!

Detailing the silver screen adventures of our favorite uncle, **FORREST J ACKERMAN!** Some were great — some were not so great! Some you've never heard of, some you'll wish to never hear of again, and some will remain a mystery long after you've put this mag down! But love 'em or leave 'em, they all have one thing in common, and that's the presence (however brief and unnoticed) of the inimitable 4SJ!

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CINEMA ACK-TASTIC!

Joe Moe gets us started with a special introduction!

HEY, RDDKIE • THE FARMER'S DAUGHTER • THE WINNER'S CIRCLE • THE TIME TRAVELERS • QUEEN OF BLDDD • THE POWER • EQUINDX • DRACULA VS. FRANKENSTEIN • SCHLÖCK • HOLLYWOOD BDULEVARD • KING KONG • THE KENTUCKY FRIED MOVIE • THE HOWLING • THE AFTERMATH • THRILLER • SCALPS • AMAZON WOMEN ON THE MOON • EVIL SPAWN • CURSE OF THE QUEERWOLF • RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD PART II • THE WIZARD OF SPEED AND TIME • THE LAUGHING DEAD • MY MOM'S A WEREWOLF • TRANSYLVANIA TWIST • MY LOVELY MONSTER • HARD TO DIE • NUDIST COLONY OF THE DEAD • BRAINDEAD • INNOCENT BLDDD • CEREMONY • THAT LITTLE MONSTER • BEVERLY HILLS COP III • ATTACK OF THE 60-FOLD CENTERFOLDS • BIKINI DRIVE-IN • DINOSAUR VALLEY GIRLS • VAMPIRELLA • FUTURE WAR • SADDAMANNEQUIN • THE VAMPIRE HUNTERS CLUB • THE DOUBLED AVenger • THE CREEP • SKINNED DEEP • THE NAKED MONSTER • THE SCORNE • THE BDNEYARD COLLECTION • SCARLET MOON • THE DEAD UNDEAD • RED VELVET

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SONS OF DR. ACULA

Brad Linaweaver brings down the closing curtain!

A FAMOUS MONSTER IN FILMLAND!

cinema ack-tastic!

A dark and shuttered room; strangers, huddled together—for what?—Shhhhhh! A silver flicker of light strobes the room. A sudden shriek causes everyone to jump out of their skin! Look! There's our ol' Uncle Forry, front and center, creepily lit in severe Gogos-yellows and greens—grinning mischievously. Sound like a nightmare? A haunted house? Maybe a visit to the Ackermuseum of Sci-Fi, Fantasy and Horror? No! It's just a typical movie theater of the sort found in every town in every city in every state in our union. That womb-like temple we visit regularly to daydream, escape, thrill and watch epic stories play out. Forry was practically raised in movie theaters. It's true, long before that infamous October 1926 issue of **AMAZING STORIES** jumped off the newsstand, grabbed hold of a 10-year-old Forry and commanded—"Take me home little boy, you will love me!"—Forrest J Ackerman was already in love with the movies.

From the day in 1922 when he saw Will Rogers and a little impish ghost-boy named "Eck" (short for Ectoplasm?) in the first "imagi-movie" in Acker-memory, ONE GLORIOUS DAY, young Forry was smitten by the cinema. He always quipped that he "picked the right pair of maternal grandparents" who sometimes took Forry to as many as seven (count em') matinees in a single afternoon! It was on those lazy weekends, in those movie palaces with grandma and grandpa that Forry first encountered the cast of scare-actors who would shape his life and subsequently, our lives. Eric of the catacombs—The Phantom of the Opera; Frankenstein's monster; the great Count Dracula; the Gillman; The Mummy and The Wolf Man! Forry was there, ticket in hand, as each of these icons of horror was first born (hatched, stitched together, cursed) onto the screen before his very eyes. He witnessed the lost 1927 Lon Chaney film LONDON AFTER MIDNIGHT.

Forry was the only person you'd ever meet who could demonstrate Chaney's "off-beat walk" described as "a cross between a sand crab skittering sideways and Groucho Marx's hunched-over, comic gait." Before he departed this realm, Forry had watched his favorite imagi-movie METROPOLIS over 100 times! Just like us, Forry couldn't get enough; he Ack-scavated as much information on movies as he could. He had to know who was beneath the make-up. What artist created those make-ups? Who wrote and directed these marvels? Today we're hard pressed to remember a time when videos or DVDs didn't exist, but think of it. Forry was actually establishing our great horror-hobby before the hobby even existed!

In the 1930s, Forry was compelled to write to Carl Laemmle, then president of Universal Pictures, to give his opinions on the latest Universal horror faire. And the big man—Laemmle himself—wrote back! Through this Forry-spondence, Ack found himself quickly amassing an impressive file full of movie stills and info on upcoming monster movies. One day, on studio letterhead Laemmle wrote, "Give this kid anything he wants!" It's not a stretch to think that our Forry-father and Forry-most collector invented collecting. We can all relate to the impulse to touch a relic from a movie we loved; a neck-bolt, a swatch of Mummy-wrap, Dracula's signet ring or a rare photo. So it's not too surprising that a boy who helped to create value and interest in genre-collecting would grow up to own the largest collection of movie memorabilia in the world. 300,000 books, artworks and objects housed in the infamous Ackermuseum; assembled for all fans to see—most every Saturday of Forry's 92-years on this planet—and always free of charge. Collecting is a personal obsession. But sharing? That's a choice not

everyone makes; an incredibly generous choice!

Forry went on to share his love of movies with all of us through the pages of the original FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND magazine. He shifted the spotlight from the movie stars to let the moviemakers gain recognition. He wanted us to know that skilled magicians performed the magic trick that was a movie, and we pored over the pages of FM in much the same way Forry must have shredded his pulp magazines back in the olden days. We looked past the monstrous faces to see what was on a shelf in the background. We wanted to learn the magic trick for ourselves. Some of us dabbled in monster make-ups, dreaming of becoming the next Jack Pierce or Dick Smith. Others wrote stories or painted and still others of us went on to become Steven Spielberg, John Landis, Joe Dante, Peter Jackson, Guillermo Del Toro, Penn & Teller, Tim Burton, Brinke Stevens, Rick Baker "Monster Maker" and you! Yes! Monster Kids like us grew up (Dra! You weren't supposed to grow up!), to be the entertainment industry's movers and shakers! All of us, great or small, were the beloved nieces and nephews of our mentor, Uncle Forry.

In return for his undying inspiration, Forry-followers included him in their films; big budget and homemade films alike. No less than 112 cameos at Forry's last count. You'll get a good look at many of these titles in the pages of this fantastic tribute issue of FAMOUS MONSTERS. You'll notice that John Landis featured Forry in his movies, and often; since Landis' first feature SCHLOCK, where Forry can be seen eating popcorn in a theater while Landis, in early Rick Baker ape make-up, mugs and torments the audience. Forry never tired of telling fans that a decade later Landis also featured him in Michael Jackson's THRILLER music video, sitting in a theater behind Jackson, eating that same stale bucket of popcorn

Joe Mee at last year's memorial for Forry.



from SCHLOCK, years before. Peter Jackson shot a Forry cameo for his early gore-fest DEAD ALIVE! Why, I even put Forry in my own horror movie, RED VELVET, for his final cameo.

What a fitting testament to Forry's nurturing of all us Monster Kids that he should live on in the movies that he so loved. I've often said that Forry's generosity and tireless cheerleading for horror movies was his way of encouraging us to make more. And we fans have answered the call by throwing our bat into the ring. I can't wait to see who makes what spectacular movie next. Forry was an avowed atheist till the day Prince Sirkki stole him from us, but I like to think that if there was a heaven for an Ackermonger, it would be decked out with plush, crushed velvet seats, a cup holder on the arm rest for an iced coffee and nothing but the most pristine prints of Ack's favorite films running for all eternity. Even though he's gone, Forry's sense of wonder continues to permeate our genre and spirit. Every time we tell his story or share one of the movies he introduced us to, we're sewing the seeds of imagination in a new generation of Monster Kids. Just as Forry-Ackerseed depended on us to grow the genre, we will come to depend on a new generation to carry on for us! It's nice to know that we can all visit our favorite Uncle anytime we want in the many movies he appeared in. And so, we go forward, knowing that *Forrest J Ackerman shall not die!*

— Joe Moe

hey, rookie

HEY, ROOKIE

(1944) Directed by Charles Barton; written by Edward Eliscu, Jay Gorney and Henry Myers, based on the play by Doris Calvon and E.B. 'Zeke' Calvon; produced by Irving Briskin, Edward Eliscu, Jay Gorney and Henry Myers.

FORREST J ACKERMAN Sgt. Ack-Ack

the farmer's daughter

Lon Chaney had an eye for spotting beauty and talent. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

THE FARMER'S DAUGHTER is a political fairy-tale made in 1947 by RKO and stars Loretta Young, Ethel Barrymore and Joseph Cotton. Not nearly as deft or insightful as one of Preston Sturges' great comedies, it nevertheless holds up as a solid entertainment. It tells the whimsical tale of a Swedish-American farm girl (played by Young) who, through a series of outlandish events,

thwarts a crooked congressman and is herself elected to the House of Representatives by the final fade out. Ably supported by the great Ethel Barrymore (of the Barrymore acting clan, whose progeny includes Drew Barrymore) and Joseph Cotton (who made his motion picture debut in Orson Welles' CITIZEN KANE), THE FARMER'S DAUGHTER is significant also for being the film that earned Loretta Young her only Oscar.

A woman's career in motion pictures, in the heyday of the studio star system, where a company would take a talented and beautiful girl and shape her and guide her in roles, write her publicity, tell her where she could be seen in public (and with whom—sometimes even who she could marry), thus creating a marketable product that would bring them lots and lots of money, often meant that a star's career would, on average, last about ten years. By the time a star was in her thirties (or, more troubling for the studio, in her forties), a star had the choice of either retiring, or moving onto character roles and play mothers, best friends, or villainesses. A female star that could stay on top for two decades was a wonder. A star that could last several decades (a Bette Davis, a Joan Crawford or a Kate Hepburn) and defy all the odds became A Legend. And so the question nags; why isn't Loretta Young better known today?

Her career spans an astonishing 77 years (1917 to 1994), all told, where she was on top of every medium she worked in. She was exquisitely beautiful. She had talent and a superb acting range. Is it simply because, in spite of solid work in films and television with virtually every top male star of every era (including Chaney, Cagney, Gable, Tracy and others) that not one of her films is remembered in the AFI Top 100? To be blunt: because she never starred in a truly "great" film?

Loretta Young began working in films as a child. In 1928, at the age of fifteen, Lon Chaney personally chose her as the female lead in his film LAUGH, CLOWN, LAUGH. Looking at her performance in that film, one is struck by her devastating, ethereal beauty and her solid screen presence. By the time the talkies came around, Young was a seasoned film veteran, but still youthful and beautiful. As her star rose, she took charge of her image and her career (much the same as other strong, savvy women did who had the gumption and backbone to fight the studio system, like Davis and Hepburn). In the 1950's, when she was in her early middle-age and new girls were coming up and being promoted by the studios, nipping at her heels and taking roles she once played, Young made the bold and (as the studio heads saw it) traitorous move of segueing to the new medium of television. In television,



Somewhere in this throng is the one and only FORREST J ACKERMAN, doing his level best to merge into the crowd! Oh, and that's Loretta Young as THE FARMER'S DAUGHTER.

she produced and starred in a string of shows and won numerous Emmy Awards. The time has come for a full re-evaluation and appreciation of the work of Loretta Young. For those who are fans (but just don't know it yet), my suggestion would be to start with a screening of *LAUGH, CLOWN, LAUGH* and work chronologically through her filmography. You'll thank me later.

And what has any of this to do with Forrest Ackerman? Nothing. Except that *THE FARMER'S DAUGHTER* is purported to be noteworthy as Forry's first big screen appearance, as an extra in a political rally scene. The legend has it that soon after Ackerman left the Army and went to Hollywood, nascent sci-fi editor and man-about-town that he was in the early days of his career, he did some background work on a couple of Hollywood pictures. And why not? It's easy money doing background work and who wouldn't want to be near Loretta Young for an

afternoon? But truth be told, your humble writer couldn't spot young Forry in the crowd to save his life.

Is Forry Ackerman in *THE FARMER'S DAUGHTER*? This writer is uncertain. Perhaps an eagle-eyed reader of this mag can find Forry in the film and post a screen-grab on the FAMOUS MONSTERS website. Was Forry aware that Lon Chaney discovered Loretta Young and gave her her first leading role? Most probably. And Forry, like the rest of us fans, was most probably glad he did.

— Mark Redfield

THE FARMER'S DAUGHTER

(1947) Directed by H. C. Potter; written by Allen Rivkin and Laura Kerr, based on the play *JUURAKON HILDA* by Hella Wuolijoki; produced by Dare Schary.

FORREST J ACKERMAN Audience Extra at Finley Rally

the winner's circle

THE WINNER'S CIRCLE

(1948) Directed by Felix E. Feist; written by Howard J. Green and Leonard Praskins; produced by Richard K. Palmer.

FORREST J ACKERMAN Man in Crowd

fja invades chicago

Director Don Glut recalls home-town fun and the first time he directed Forrest J Ackerman.

— Jessie Lilley

The first time I directed Forry in a film was in 1962, when I was 18 years old! I was still living in Chicago and Forry came out for the 20th World Science Fiction Convention. He was in town a day or so early and he came to my house for a big dinner for some fans. I had a 16mm movie camera and followed him around with it the whole time. I had this gag I wanted to do, so we went out into the backyard to shoot it.

I had an extra copy of *HORROR MONSTERS #1* and I wanted to get a movie of him reacting to it as though it was a piece of crap, you know. I told him to rip the magazine up and stomp on it and stab it with his pen—which he did! But, he was very reluctant to destroy the magazine. His inner collector kicked in at that point and you can see in the film that he's tearing it apart, in a way that would make it very easy to put back together if you wanted to.

Now, that bit of film I included as a bonus feature on the DVD collection of all my amateur films called *I WAS A TEENAGER MOVIE MAKER*. So if you click on the Extra called *FJA Invades Chicago*, you'll see Forry doing his best to not destroy a copy of the competition: *HORROR MONSTERS #1*.

the time travelers

Ib Melchior helmed this space opera from a story he'd written with David L. Hewitt before the latter went on to glory with *MONSTERS CRASH THE PAJAMA PARTY* and *DR. TERROR'S GALLERY OF HORRORS*. Melchior's IMDB page is much nobler; with credits on such durable curiosities as *REPTILICUS*, *ROBINSON CRUSOE ON MARS* and *DEATH RACE 2000*; his sole other directorial effort, *THE ANGRY RED PLANET*, an oft-cited example of both 1950s Red Scare

paranoia and arty low-budget monster FX. *ARP*, like *TIME TRAVELERS*, was released through American International Pictures, fabled Parnassus of exploitation filmmaking whose earliest B&W sci-fi titles were just then slathered all over the wee hours on weekend television. In that long-gone day, chances were very good that the mid-1950s titles you'd encounter in the pages of *FM*, like *I MARRIED A MONSTER FROM OUTER SPACE* or *NOT OF THIS EARTH* would soon run on some VHF/UHF station on the outer range of your TV reception (with or without some ghoulish host cracking corn shuck yux between commercials). It's somehow encouraging to see AIP still in there pitching this throwback stuff at the drive-in/grindhouse public as late as the LBJ era.

Irresponsible scientists Eric (Preston Foster), Steve (Philip Carey) and Carol (Merry Anders) do much electricity-sucking time-travel research at the local university. They accidentally go ahead 150 years in time, stranding themselves in a desert world inhabited by roving bands of angry bald guys in jumpsuits. These unfortunates are mutants besieging the last redoubt of inbred "true" homo sapiens that long ago escaped atomic annihilation. This remnant is propped up by android slave labor, most of which is desperately prepping an escape rocket to Alpha Centauri, before inevitable inundation by a rising tide of radiation-altered scum. These dismal straits worsen by the scientists' clashing with the inbreds' power structure (John Hoyt, Joan Woodbury), over their customary brutality toward "deviants", so our haughty future cousins decide to strand them on Earth. Our intrepid scientists then decide to escape on their own, MacGyvering-up another time portal quicker than it takes to say "Herbert George Wells", and it's *ho!* for the open wormhole.

I won't give away the trick ending, but there's fine hugger-mugger on the way there, some surprisingly graphic proto-gore FX and this is one of the very few movies in the Heroic Scientist canon that resolves its plot



Forry diligently squaring things away in *THE TIME TRAVELERS*, perhaps his finest performance.

through multiple catastrophic human error. This startling novelty wasn't lost on me when seeing *THE TIME TRAVELERS* on WTTV's NIGHTMARE THEATRE sometime in the late 1960s, nor was its close similarity to *THE TIME TUNNEL*—Irwin Allen's 1966-67 ABC-TV series about two hapless scientists come unstuck in history by a botched Cold War-era time-travel device. I knew even then that plagiarism is a no-no and another durable truism imparted is that AIP movies typically sport better cast values than most TV series—this movie is no exception. The three leads are; tough, forceful Foster (I SHOT JESSE JAMES and KANSAS CITY CONFIDENTIAL are two in a long list of crime and cowboy movies he shouldered his way through), equally macho Carey (his Capt. Parmalee on the TV series LAREDO convincingly autocratic enough to boss the rowdy likes of Neville Brand and William Smith) and onetime Fox starlet Anders. These three balanced well with the blandly starchy menace of Hoyt (best known to horror fans for the 1957 AIP DR CYCLOPS knockoff, ATTACK OF THE PUPPET PEOPLE) and Ms. Woodbury (star of the bizarre 1941 Monogram programmer KING OF THE ZOMBIES), with onetime PLAYBOY model Delores Wells thrown in for sexy brunette ballast.

All play it absolutely straight, in best get-in-there-and-sell-'em-this-load-of-hoke manner so beloved of B-movies. Forry has a brief vignette as a busy technician who literally squares a circle before our eyes.

— Ron Garmon

In the course of research for this issue, I was directed by long-time associate Tom Weaver to director Ib Melchior, and proceeded to be charmed off my chair by this wonderful flirt.

— Jessie Lilley

Oh, Forry, yes. *THE TIME TRAVELERS* was originated by a young man named David Hewitt, who as a magician. He said to me, "Why go to all the problems of special effects that cost a lot of money, when you can do the same thing with a magician's illusions?" So we adapted about a half a dozen illusions that became absolutely incredible on the screen, but were done right on the stage in one take. For instance, we had an android whose head had been damaged. He enters and we never took the camera off him—this was in one camera shot—you see him coming in, he lies down on the table, they take his head off, put another one on and he gets up and walks off. And it cost nothing because we just adapted

and rendered a magician's illusion.

We had another one—and this is interesting—it was something that we called the Vibra Transporter: it's a free standing steel construct, almost like a BBQ but it used a board instead of a spit. So you strap a man on the board and rotate him, as on a rotisserie, and all of a sudden the board turns and the man is gone. This had an element of possible injury. If something had gone wrong the man would have fallen down on his face! The actor was Steve Franken. We told him we had a stunt man for him for the scene and he said, "No way! If it's not me on that there it doesn't mean anything!" And he did it himself. I thought that was—well, of all the people who held their breath, I held mine the longest. But if you can imagine a chicken on a spit and all of a sudden the chicken is gone? That was the effect.

Now, Forry was a good friend of mine. When I arrived in this neck of the woods in 1957, after having directed live television in New York, one of the first people I met was Forry Ackerman. I was interested in science fiction and he became a very good friend. At one time, he was my agent. Incidentally, he sold my short story called *THE RACER* which became *DEATH RACE 2000* and which has just recently been remade. So, when I did *THE TIME TRAVELERS*—I liked to put my friends in it—he didn't want to do any major thing, so we made him Technician #3 (credited as Square-frame technician). Now you know that Forry was apt to do some horrendous puns, so—we gave him one. It centered on another illusion: you have a round, metal circle and Forry was supposed to square them. So on screen, Forry would wiggle the ring and all of a sudden it became a square! I still have that thing in my closet. Someone comes in to say, "Hey, technician #3! You're wanted over here." And Forry says, "I will be right there, as soon as I get things squared away." A really bad pun, but it worked.

THE TIME TRAVELERS

(1964) Directed by Ib Melchior; written by Ib Melchior and David L. Hewitt; screenplay by Ib Melchior; produced by Don Levy and Bill Redlin.

FORREST J ACKERMAN Square-frame Technician

queen of blood

Back in the days of triple features—the neighborhood Bijoux and drive-ins along every wide spot in the Great American Road—demand for SF and horror movies was pervasive and acute. Of the traditional Hollywood genres, the western had been largely absorbed by TV

and musicals split into gigantic multi-million dollar mainstream fare for Middle America and cheap rock 'n roll garbage for their kids. Fantastic movies though, took in mountains of cash every weekend. So it made sense that American-International Pictures—just then the West's leading purveyor of junk cinema—would acquire the rights to two handsomely arty Russian space movies, carve them into visually appetizing chunks and give some in-house wonder boy like Curtis Harrington \$50,000 to write and shoot a space opera to fit the dismembered pieces.

After all, he'd had pulled off the same trick the previous year with the daft *VOYAGE TO THE PREHISTORIC PLANET* with similar material, including a wan-looking Basil Rathbone. Neither film does much for the legend of a director now fast acquiring a posthumous cult as a James Whale of the 1960s and 70s, but *BLOOD*'s bold colors and elegant framing make the film quite pleasing as video wallpaper, a use to which I've seen it put at more than one underground party in LA's warehouse district. Familiar faces like Rathbone, Dennis Hopper and John Saxon bob in the air like painted balloons for long static takes reminiscent of *CREATION OF THE HUMANIDS* (1964)—another arty sci-fi second feature that comes off more like a series of live action *ASTOUNDING SF* covers than a narrative film.

American writers on the horror film tend to underrate pictorial virtues, but the film's 2003 screening at the prestigious Sitges Film Festival in Spain indicates its pulp impressionism is likely more durable than fannish critics think. The plot (such as it is) of *QUEEN OF BLOOD* would be dished up again as *ALIEN* (1979), but only viewers actually paying attention will ever notice. Florence Marly came to Hollywood from France on the strength of her Cannes-nominated performance in René Clément's *LES MAUDITS* (1947), but, except for her turn opposite Bogey in *TOKYO JOE* (1949), this is certainly the Czech-born actress's best-known U.S. screen appearance. A Hollywood blacklist survivor then nearing sixty, Ms. Marly had an odd, awkward beauty given definitive context here as the voiceless vampire queen incautiously brought aboard an earthbound starship. She doesn't quite make it Terraside, but a rasher of red pulsating eggs do, carried out of the ship by a robust Forry Ackerman, grinning expectantly at the carnage to come as the end credits roll up.

— Ron Garmon

QUEEN OF BLOOD

[1966] Directed by Curtis Harrington; written by Curtis Harrington; produced by Samuel Z. Arkoff, Roger Carman, George Edwards and Stephanie Rothman.

FORREST J ACKERMAN Faraday's Aide



In this scene from *QUEEN OF BLOOD*, a job well done is something that Forry finds very...satisfying? Thrilling? Hmmm...there ought to be a better word...

the power

THE POWER

(1968) Directed by Byron Haskin; written by John Gay, based on the novel by Frank M. Robinson, produced by George Pal.

FORREST J ACKERMAN [uncredited]

equinox

As a film fan weaned on FM in my teens and who graduated to a professional F/X makeup career some 30 years ago, EQUINOX is the kind of low-budget wonder which makes me cheer. Why? Because it's a movie made by FM fans who also graduated to professional film careers; notably visual F/X wizard Dennis Muren of ILM, and the late animator Dave Allen, prolific latter day Harryhausen of Charles Band's Full Moon empire.

Authored by Mark McGee (who co-directed with Muren) in 1965, EQUINOX is something of a blueprint for the notoriously more graphic EVIL DEAD (1981) in its Lovecraftian adventure of teens vs. satanic monsters from another dimension in a remote forest. In both films a coveted book of ancient sorcery is the catalyst for the invasion of these fiends into our world, and human casualties suffer death, demonic possession—or both. THE EQUINOX - A JOURNEY INTO THE SUPERNATURAL, was completed over two years by Muren, McGee and Allen (with assistance from established matte artist Jim Danforth) in 16mm for a paltry \$6,500. We never saw it until recently, when Criterion released its superb DVD edition which includes the film's 1970 reincarnation as just plain EQUINOX, courtesy of veteran distributor/producer Jack H. Harris (THE BLOB, DINOSAURUS!, THE 4-D MAN) who bought the 70-minute amateur effort from Muren et al with plans to reunite the cast (including Forry Ackerman as the voice of a psychiatrist on tape) and expand it to feature length by augmenting existing scenes and adding new ones.

Jack Woods, a Roger Corman associate and overall post-production expert, crafted a revised version of McGee's original story, bankrolled with \$150,000 from Harris. Woods directed the additional footage, including scenes featuring himself in the new role of Mr. Asmodeus, the eerie park ranger whose pasty greasepaint complexion and arched eyebrows infer an agenda not entirely in keeping with the policies of the Department of Parks and Recreation. This is the version most of us caught up with in drive-ins, late night television, and an 8mm short put out by Castle Films—I still have mine! I believe I'm

correct in saying that despite the infusion of money from Harris, the bulk of the film's extraordinary visual F/X sequences—utilizing eye-popping stop-motion monsters, forced perspective, innovative composite techniques with front projection (Muren again, way ahead of his time and CGI) and Jim Danforth's superb matte paintings—were all produced on a shoestring for the so-called "amateur" EQUINOX of 1967. The Criterion DVD release grants us the opportunity to judge for ourselves if the Harris/Woods contribution really did anything more than provide the movie with its wide international release which reportedly compensated Harris to the tune of \$1 million.

Muren is God now at ILM, with many Oscars on his shelf, but I wonder if he has gone F/X crazy and forgotten other lessons EQUINOX might have taught him. His late collaborator, Dave Allen, noted the increasing trend of producing effects-heavy films wherein story was a poor second to visual spectacle—a point driven home in the present day with CGI that makes it possible for almost any movie to cram every frame with too much of a good thing. Check out 2010's CLASH OF THE TITANS remake in 3-D and see if you give a hoot about any of the human interaction. Special Visual Effects are everything now, to the point they are no longer special—just downright common. I'll admit to being somewhat peeved therefore, when listening to Muren's commentary track on the DVD release of GIANT BEHEMOTH (1959), the Willis O'Brien/Pete Peterson dinosaur-invades-London thriller closely modeled on Harryhausen's earlier BEAST FROM 20,000 FATHOMS. In the commentary Muren, joined by animator Phil Tippett, derides the non-monster scenes—dramatic exposition between scientists and the military about the Behemoth's origin and how to combat him—as “padding” needed to fill out the picture and bump it up to feature length. Muren's own problem with EQUINOX in 1967! Throughout the commentary, Muren and Tippett rank on what happen to be very well-scripted scenes performed by reliable actors including Gene Evans and Andre Morrell which bring necessary human interest to this often effects-flawed but (for a change) quite adult monster thriller. “Forty-five minutes into the movie before the Behemoth attacks London!” our commentators complain, dismissing director Eugene Lourie's careful build-up of tension (with partial glimpses of the monster) which makes the London rampage that much more effective. Lourie achieved similar drama as the director of the Harryhausen BEAST and his last similar effort, GORGON in 1961. If it ain't on the page it ain't on the stage (or the screen) no matter how grand the visual effects are, a point director Lourie clearly understood three times over when making the same basic subject with three vastly different budgets. Muren and his colleagues would



Emanating from this tape recorder in EQUINOX are the dulcet tones of the amazing Uncle Forry. Apparently there's also a monster somewhere in this movie too.

do well to remember that in this age of digital laziness when hack directors obscure their shortcomings by laying on the CGI flash in lieu of substance.

— Norman Bryn

Another movie Forry furiously plugged in FM, this one began life as a 1967 student film titled *THE EQUINOX—A JOURNEY INTO THE SUPERNATURAL*, lensed in LA's Tujunga Canyon by young fright-film fans Dennis Muren and Mark Thomas McGee, with future FX wizards Dave Allen and Jim Danforth contributing some startling monsters. Indie impresario Jack H. Harris bought the film, bulked up the running time by a few minutes and released the result, continuity errors and all. The plot—that old proto-“Scooby Doo” howler of four kids finding a cursed book and the manner of Hell unleashed thereby—takes a leisurely time to unfold even at 80 minutes, with Forry turning up as a gentle voice on a tape recorder asking demented young David (Edward Connell) to relate the horrifying events that landed him in the rubber room without his beloved crucifix.

Other casting oddities include a cameo by science fiction Grandmaster Fritz Leiber as the luckless Dr. Waterman and the other of the two juvie leads is Frank Bonner (billed as Frank Boers, Jr.), still some years away from his turn as comically sleazy salesman Herb Tarlek on *WKRP IN CINCINNATI*. Robin Christopher, aka Robin Ann Snider, played Bonner's girlfriend Vicki and went on to be Stevie Nicks' vocal coach before dying of leukemia in 1982. Whatever one thinks of the finished product, the kids who made it (and others like them) were dear to Dr.acula's swollen heart, representing as they did the self-starting future of monster movies. Eagle-eyed fans might notice several marked similarities to Sam Raimi's *THE EVIL DEAD* (1981), but such plot elements were even then hoary stuff to any fan of H.P. Lovecraft. Indeed, the notion of pre-recorded babble bringing incredulity to those

who hear it is at least as old as *KRAPP'S LAST TAPE* by Samuel Beckett, which is about as high as modernist art gets. Of such jetsam are pop culture nightmares made.

— Ron Garmon

EQUINOX

[1970] Directed by Jack Woods; written by Mark Thomas McGee and Jack Woods; produced by Jack H. Harris and Dennis Muren.

FORREST J ACKERMAN Doctor on Tape Recorder (voice)

dracula vs. frankenstein

This admittedly awful, yet somehow endearingly classic example of 1970s drive-in product is screened today in a different light and context considering the fates of those involved in its production, including the bizarre murder and entombment of its director in 1995 at his Nevada ranch. Originating as an entirely different picture in 1969 (alternately titled *BLOOD SEEKERS* or *BLOOD FREAKS*) the project evolved, was abandoned and/or re-shot over two years to become *DRACULA VS. FRANKENSTEIN*. Director Al Adamson and producer Sam Sherman, fresh off their other most famous title, *Satan's Sadists*, transferred many of the elements of their violent biker flick, including cast members of what might be termed Independent International's actors rep company.

Fading Russ Tamblyn, the sicko lead in the former, roars into *DRACULA VS. FRANKENSTEIN* on his chopper as if he just clocked out of *SATAN'S SADISTS*, with heroine Regina Carrol, blond bombshell of both films, hitching a ride with him. The veterans we care most about, of course, are Lon Chaney Jr. and J. Carrol Naish, both aged and infirm, with the awful-looking Chaney actually dying of throat cancer which necessitated this final mute performance. His Groton, homicidal servant to Naish's crippled Dr. Frankenstein, is assumed to be yet another Lenny clone, but he comes off more like a geriatric reprise of Butcher Benton from Lon's earlier *INDESTRUCTIBLE MAN* (1955), getting off on several graphic decapitations in this curiously PG rated film.

Other veterans declined to participate, including Paul Lukas, Francis Lederer and Broderick Crawford, but the missed opportunity here is John Carradine, whom Sherman wanted for Dracula but was vetoed by Adamson in favor of his stock broker (!) Roger Engel. Rechristened “Zandor Vorkov” by technical consultant Forry Ackerman, Vorkov (whose overdone makeup became a continuity joke) is plain awful despite the echo-chamber vocals employed to bolster his delivery. It makes one long for the camp intensity Carradine brought to the role as late as

BILLY THE KID VS. DRACULA in 1965. The parallels between vampires and stock brokers may be more obvious in the present economic crisis than they were in 1971, but that doesn't explain why Sherman didn't insist on Carradine for the obvious promotional pairing of him along with Naish and Chaney, or why Adamson favored his stock broker when Carradine already had a working relationship with the director.

Forry gets his own role of course, one Dr. Beaumont who is crushed by John Bloom's lumbering Frankenstein Monster whose makeup (credited to Tony Tierney) suggests a moldy muffin as Bloom repeatedly staggers into frame like a refugee from a failed AA meeting. Forry reported his on-set experience in FM at the time, noting the promise of a less "physical" demise since the Monster was, at some point, supposed to have become "vampirized" by Dracula—a plot device (among others) detailed in FM but abandoned in the script. Forry, suffering an injury sustained with home exercise equipment, was assured he'd be painlessly "fanged" to death by Bloom, but Tierney's makeup was so excessive it became impossible to insert the teeth into Bloom's mouth, so Forry dutifully submitted to wrestling with the bruiser!

Shot on 16mm for grainy 35mm enlargement, **DRACULA VS. FRANKENSTEIN** is typical of Adamson's poor visuals when cramped sets and night exteriors are required, with plenty of fog, black velvet drapes, and glaring strobe lights to mask the sparse surroundings. **SATAN'S SADISTS**, by comparison, is shot in daylight with the expanse of the California desert as its primary "set", making it appear to be a bigger picture and Adamson a far more proficient director. Compensations in **DRACULA VS. FRANKENSTEIN** include the cast (Jim "Dallas" Davis, Anthony Eisley and Angelo Rossitto among them, each familiar already with stinker Sci-Fi), the rousing William Lava music score over tacky but vibrant title graphics similar to Sherman's **BLOOD ISLAND** releases, and the reappearance of Ken Strickfadden's mad-lab sparking gizmos from the 1931 **FRANKENSTEIN**, its sequels and countless other movies and serials. To see that familiar "cosmic-diffuser" apparatus (the rod with the two copper balls at either end) poised to transmit energy into a moldy third-rate Karloff substitute in 1971—just 40 years after Boris himself was swathed in bandages beneath it—is almost surreal and a jarring metaphor for the ever changing directions of the American film industry in so short a period of time. "Walk silently, Groton; walk well," Naish advises Chaney, off with his axe for another nightly decapitation spree. He might just as well have been addressing the entire Hollywood community, which had strayed pretty far afield from the old studio days

when Naish was an Academy Award nominee for Best Supporting Actor twice within two years.

— Norman Bryn

the dramatic death of dr. beaumont

"Im going to pay the water bill. Want to go with me?"

That was always a welcome monthly query coming from my dad, when I was growing up. While I'm certain that dispersing his hard-earned cash for our regular supply of H2O never gave Dad any pleasure, I always looked forward to accompanying him.

You see, the little drug store where we paid our utility bills had a splendidly stocked newsstand, including well-stuffed comic book racks. Predictably, the sour-faced little old lady at the cash register never failed to give me a surly frown, along with my change, whenever I plunked down the latest issue **FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND** upon her counter. I could never understand that puritanical reaction over a simple, harmless monster magazine. Fortunately, my parents never seemed to give a hoot about what I read. I remember many of my friends weren't nearly as lucky.

FM's distribution seemed spotty in those days, or maybe our water bill just didn't coincide with its arrival. Even so,



Tragic figure Dr. Beaumont (Forrest J. Ackerman in probably his finest performance) has not only DRACULA VS. FRANKENSTEIN to contend with, but the stunt driver is waiting in the wings too!

I'd been on a roll that year, managing to collect at least every other issue. Eagerly I began reading FM number 89 in my dad's truck, excitedly turning the pulpy pages while he cussed the Sunday traffic.

And what an issue it was!

First, there was that ominous purplish photo-cover of actor "Zandor Vorkov" from DRACULA VS FRANKENSTEIN, an ambitious monster movie title if there ever was one. My synapses fired. My pulse quickened. My dad grumbled low-toned expletives at the weaving Volkswagen in the left lane. It was a magic moment.

A little while later, as I continued to read in my inner sanctum, the true epic nature of DRACULA VS FRANKENSTEIN really began to sink in. Count Dracula! The Frankenstein Monster! Lon Chaney, Jr.! J. Carroll Naish! Angelo Rossitto! All were returning to the big screen! Most exciting of all, for me, was the revelation that FM editor Forrest J Ackerman himself was to play a role in the new movie!

Up to that point, I'd only seen Forry in photos within the magazine, usually swamped among his sprawling collection, or hobnobbing with the likes of Karloff, Lugosi or Vincent Price. Somehow, though the exact reasons are rather difficult to explain today, the prospect of seeing the Ackermmonster himself in an actual monster movie, in full color and bigger than life, was a terribly exciting event.

Anxiously, I made a daily ritual of searching the theatrical movie listings in our evening newspaper, studying the pages from top to bottom. No way, no how, could I miss DRACULA VS FRANKENSTEIN.

But miss it, I did.

I waited and waited, week after week, but the movie didn't show. Placating myself somewhat by acting out the story, as I'd read in FM's filmbook, with my Aurora Monster Scenes plastic kits (Dr. Deadly stood in for Forry's doomed Dr. Beaumont), I still hoped for the best. Finally, the film did play for a few weeks at a local drive-in, but it was impossible to talk my dad into piling into the car and paying to see a movie.

"Plenty of stuff just as good on TV for free," he'd always say, and actually this time he was right.

Triumphantly, only a few short months later, DRACULA VS FRANKENSTEIN showed up on the Friday night late

show. It was like magic.

Excitedly, I read Forry's name in the colorful opening credits, a bit miffed to notice it was misspelled as "Forest". (At least, they properly left out the period after the "J".) Anyway, there it all was in my own living room—just as FM had promised; Kenneth Strickfaden's original Frankenstein laboratory equipment, Count Dracula's lightning-spitting signet ring, Lon Chaney, Jr.'s lumbering zombie and Forrest J Ackerman's dramatic on-screen demise at the brutish, sutured hands of Mary Shelley's Monster. I remember practicing the same stunt, frame by frame, with some of my enthusiastic cousins, with all of us ending up happily scabbed and bruised. Good times.

It is to Forry's credit and editorial showmanship that DRACULA VS FRANKENSTEIN seemed, to me anyway, a much better film than it really was.

Also, truth be told, the epic Death of Dr. Beaumont is very darkly shot, and the photos in the magazine had captured the event much better. Not that any of that really matters. I'd finally seen Forry on film.

And it was glorious.

— Martin Powell

DRACULA VS. FRANKENSTEIN

(1971) Directed by Al Adamson; written by William Pugsley and Samuel M. Sherman; produced by Al Adamson, Mardi Rustam, Mohammed Rustam and John Van Horn.

FORREST J ACKERMAN Dr. Beaumont

schlock

In John Landis' debut feature SCHLOCK, we once again find Forry in one of his natural habitats—a movie theater—enjoying a bit of meta-cinema by watching



Ack and SCHLOCK share popcorn while taking in a Steve McQueen flick.



the scene from *THE BLOB* (1958) in which patrons at a movie house watch *DAUGHTER OF HORROR* (1955). The title character, a shaggy throwback called Schlockthropus and played by Landis himself in early Rick Baker makeup, parks his hide next to 4E and digs into his buttered corn; quelle rude.

The scene is actually one of the highlights of this amateur comedy-horror, which plays as a sort of comic take on *TROG* (1970), though most already consider that film amusing in its own right. In typical Landis comedy fashion, *SCHLOCK* grabs an armload of gags and hurls them at the viewer; a few hit their target, like blind girl Mindy mistaking Schlock for a lost dog, while others simply splat without much impact (riffs on 2001, everything involving Saul Kahan's Detective Sgt. Wino). It's hard to fault *SCHLOCK* for anything—it is, essentially, a backyard movie, with the same sugar-cereal-driven energy as Ray Dennis Steckler's films (minus the off-ramps into psychedelic Weird-Oh-dom), and one can easily understand how FJA got involved with it (as well as several subsequent Landis projects, like *KENTUCKY FRIED MOVIE* and *AMAZON WOMEN ON THE MOON*).

SCHLOCK © Jack H. Harris Enterprises

SCHLOCK runs on the same giddy, goony gas that bubbles up when monster kids like Landis and Baker turned on their local creature feature broadcast (or thumbed the pages of *FM*) to eyeball movie apes like *Mighty Joe Young* or even *The Mighty Gorga* and thought, "Jeez, I could do better than that." Those are Forry's people—always were, always will be. One can imagine Landis thinking that the best day of his life was upon him the day he trained his camera on Forry for *SCHLOCK*. Oh, Don Glut's in the movie too; no doubt he, Landis and Baker swapped *FM* stories for hours that particular day.

— Paul Gaita

SCHLOCK

(1973) Directed by John Landis; written by John Landis; produced by George Folsey Jr., Jack H. Harris and James C. O'Rourke.

FORREST J ACKERMAN Man in Cinema

hollywood boulevard

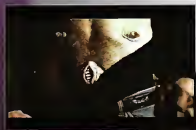
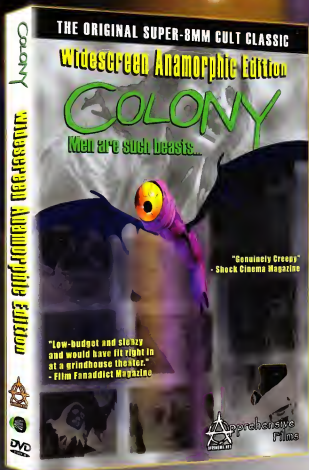
Directed by Joe Dante and Allan Arkush and released by Roger Corman's New World Pictures, HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD is an important film. Beyond its entertainment value, HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD stands as a document of the underside of Hollywood in the 1970s and a near-documentary of the day-to-day workings of Roger Corman's New World Pictures.

— Jessie Lilley

By 1976, when *HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD* was released, "Hollywood" as the general public knew it, was dead and the studios were making films by young, brash filmmakers, brimming with new ideas and a sense of social consciousness, many of whom had started or worked with Corman and American International Pictures only a few years earlier. The moguls who built the town and created the legend of Hollywood were all gone. Jack L. Warner was the last of the giants, retiring in 1969 after selling off a large chunk of his studio to Seven Arts in 1966; he passed away in 1978. Robert Evans was now running the show over at Paramount and John Calley headed what was left of Warner Bros. Corman alumni like actors Jack Nicholson, Bruce Dern, Dennis Hopper, Sylvester Stallone and filmmakers like Francis Ford Coppola and Martin Scorsese were now working with these major studios and had production deals. Giant, bloated films were shunted aside for lower-budgeted, edgier adult material—and they were making money.

Meanwhile, Roger Corman, who had been working in the film industry at a prolific and break-neck pace since 1954 and had grown tired of directing but still wanted to

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stay in the film business. He turned to strictly producing movies and handling their distribution. Financially comfortable and having learned the distribution ropes from his close association with AIP, Corman used his contacts with distributors in the then thriving and lucrative drive-in circuit (and the hard top theatres in urban areas across the country), and founded New World Pictures in 1970. With New World, he created product and raised the exploitation bar previously established by American International and other, smaller distributors. A more permissible era had emerged in the mid to late 1960s with films like *EASY RIDER* (which began life as a Corman produced, AIP financed venture, but was eventually made by Bob Raefelson) and others—and Corman saw that exploitable sex and violence could be upped for a new youth market. If the Corman alumni and their like-minded artistic brothers and sisters could push the envelope and shake-up audiences with films from Big Hollywood on down, Corman would come from the bottom up; employing fresh, untried talent (a tried and true method that his unerring instincts evidently proved) and help shake the audience awake and clear off the Entertainment Richter Scale.

New World had success immediately with its films and success only increased with *DEATH RACE 2000*, *GRAND THEFT AUTO* and Corman's sex and violence exploitation cycles of nurses, teachers and women in prison sagas. Pictures like *CAGED HEAT* and *THE STUDENT NURSES* made money and established an unspoken formula that was followed by almost every writer and director that Corman hired: the film must contain full-frontal nudity (anywhere), plenty of action and violence (when appropriate) and, as Jonathan Demme put it "a slight social message".

Producer Jon Davison, who had made a number of these "women cycle" films for Corman, bet Corman that he could make a New World Picture for about half the price that they were costing at that time. His scheme, concocted with *HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD*'s eventual co-directors Joe Dante and Alan Arkush (who were working in New World's trailer department) was based on a simple premise: they would save money by using as much previously owned action footage from other New World films. The story they developed to incorporate all of this cinematic gold was a simple moving-making plot, and the fictitious studio in their film, Miracle Pictures, would be a thinly disguised version of New World itself.

HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD opens with the fresh and innocent Candy Hope (played by beautiful Candice Rialson, already a veteran of exploitation pictures)

arriving in seedy and run-down Hollywood, to pursue her dreams of being an actress. A series of unhappy dupes and accidents ensue, including being suckered into a bank robbery; she soon lands in talent agent Dick Miller's office. Miller's character (called Walter Paisley, name check: his character in Corman's *BUCKET OF BLOOD*), seems to book talent for bizarre birthday parties and shopping center openings as much as for seedier studios like Miracle Pictures. Indeed, "Big Hollywood" never makes an appearance in the film. It's clear that all are laboring outside of the mainstream and although the myth and pull of Hollywood looms over them much like the famous Hollywood sign itself, "Hollywood" is forever out of their reach. The planet Mars is closer to these struggling, ambitious dreamers. The cast is uniformly excellent and plays with a fun, clear-eyed gusto. In addition to Rialson and Miller, the fabulous Mary Woronov, Rita Georg, Tara Strohmeier, George Wagner, Jonathan Kaplan and Richard Doran star.

A plot of a sort kicks in at about the 30 minute mark, where the cast and crew of the current "women in the jungle" picture, under the direction of Erich Von Leppe (name check: Karloff's character in *THE TERROR*, played by the wonderful Paul Bartel who also belmed *DEATH RACE 2000*), is terrorized by an anonymous killer bumping off the leading ladies one by one. As the merry band of movie-making maniacs struggle on at all costs, we're treated to an array of oddities in the film's "everything but the kitchen sink" mentality. These gem-like moments include Commander Cody and the Lost Planet Airmen's song "Everybody's Doin' It" (directed by Arkush—perhaps one of the first music videos), a rampaging Godzilla (billed as "Godzina"), cameos by Forry Ackerman and screen writer Charles B. Griffith as a pool boy who falls into a pool for no reason—and Robby the Robot.

HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD is a picaresque adventure of the misadventures of making a film with no money and less time, clearly in the New World style. It's



Given that Perry was a teetotaler, this bit in *HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD* actually required ACTING!

Channeling his role in **THE FARMER'S DAUGHTER**, here FJA joins a panicked crowd as they flee from a special effect to be added later in 1976's **KING KONG**.

KONG



Joe Dante's first film (Arkush had directed one feature prior to this, called **SEPTUAGENARIAN SUBSTITUTE BALL**) and the picture moves briskly from one silly situation to the next. The film-within-a-film also makes no real sense, as the makers of **HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD** have crafted their opus around found footage from New World's vault; but the caroming nature of the story adds to the entertainment value.

Along the way there are plenty of jabs at making cheap, no-budget exploitation pictures, but the humor is never bitter or mean. Clearly all involved love what they're doing. They've been given a chance to grab some cameras and set loose to learn how to make movies. And it's the 1970's, which means that full-frontal (female) nudity is frequently featured, but never in a snickering, embarrassed, "pop-your-top" 1980s way—more of an innocent, comfortable-in-my-skin, "the body is beautiful" way. What could be better than that?

HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD stands up well enough on its own, but should really be seen on a double-bill with the out-of-print documentary **ROGER CORMAN: HOLLYWOOD'S WILD ANGEL**. Both illuminate and inform the other, and together make a wonderful document contributing to the history and understanding of cinema of the 1970's.

— Mark Redfield

king kong

"Look, Mom," I said, pointing at a grainy grey photo in our newspaper. "King Kong is dead on the street in New York City."

Indeed, there on the printed page was the late, great ape, all fifty-plus feet of him, surrounded by a gawking crowd of extras. Not surprisingly, my mother was only mildly interested.

"Oh. Where did they find him?" she absently inquired, never quite taking her eyes off her soap opera.

I murmured something sarcastic in reply, I've forgotten just what, privately astonished that Mom had not only confused the enormous movie prop as a real creature, but she also wasn't particularly impressed.

Of course, serious monster fan that I was, even after discovering girls, I'd already learned all about the new Dino de Laurentiis production exclusively in the pages of **FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND** magazine, as edited by Forrest J Ackerman, months before the appearance of that article in our local paper.

Eagerly, I had awaited what would surely be the greatest fantasy adventure film of all time. After all, while the original Merian C. Cooper classic had long been my favorite movie—the multi-zillion dollar budget of this new **KING KONG** would seemingly render its predecessor pale by comparison, and it also promised a giant hi-tech robotic ape in the starring role! Of course, I naively assumed that

HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD

(1976) Directed by Allan Arkush and Joe Dante; written by Danny Opatoshu; produced by Roger Corman, Jon Davison and Teri Schwartz.

FORREST J ACKERMAN Party Guest

the dinosaurian denizens of Skull Island would be similar life-sized mechanical monstrosities and that suited me just fine. My imagination seethed with excitement for the Space Age technological miracles that I was breathlessly going to witness, white-knuckled, hypnotically glued to the theatrical screen.

Yes, indeed, Forry's special KING KONG filmbook, and subsequent issues of FM, had taught me everything I knew of the beloved classic film and all about the modern remake well in advance. It was even rumored in the magazine that Forrest J Ackerman himself would have a cameo in the new movie. Marvelous! All fitting and proper, I remember thinking to myself. After all, there was no more passionate fan of KING KONG on the planet than Forry. He had been in the audience during its premiere in 1933, when the gigantic bust of King Kong himself haunted the forecourt of Grauman's Chinese Theater in Hollywood. He'd met Fay Wray and Willis O'Brien. He even owned the actual dinosaur models so brilliantly constructed by Marcel Delgado. Of course, Forry Ackerman should be in the new movie.

A giant robotic ape battling prehistoric mechanized monsters, a saucy blonde ingénue and Forrest J Ackerman, all on the big screen, and it was coming to a theater near me. The anticipation alone made algebra and teenage angst almost tolerable.

Finally, at long last, the big moment arrived.

This was the year of the bicentennial, toward the end of bell bottoms and the beginning of Billy Beer. I was still suffering the pure poisonous boredom of high school when I first saw the long awaited Dino de Laurentiis remake of KING KONG upon its national release.

As I recall, I actually saw it twice. The first time I sat through Dino's grand opus was with a date—who bawled her eyes out at the tragic if predictable conclusion—and the second time with my older brother. I still don't exactly remember how I managed to talk him into tagging along. Both times the theater audience was packed and many, if not most, were emotionally shaken as the end credits rolled, my brother included. I was even a bit choked up myself.

However, the film was, upon reflection, not very good.

The total lack of dinosaurs was a major disappointment. I kept waiting for them, but they never showed. Even my nine year old nephew didn't believe in that phony giant snake. Although the basic plot was similar to the original

film, it was honed and restructured to fit in with the then-current energy crisis. While I liked Jeff Bridges' well-meaning eco-friendly hero, Charles Grodin's oily cartoon villain was impossible to take seriously. Newcomer Jessica Lange seemed uncomfortably glitchy and embarrassingly out of place.

Perhaps most disheartening, I never did manage to find Forry in the film, currently listed on The Internet Movie Data Base as an uncredited "Fleeing Extra in Crowd."

And yet, I paid to see it twice. Why? Well, it was a genuine monster movie and those were hard to come by in those days. That certainly counted for something. And, while he had been somewhat tamed, it was King Kong, after a fashion. It was Kong himself that lured me back for a second look.

Although, the highly publicized giant robot prop is unconvincingly visible for an awkward few seconds of screen time, it is actually the budding genius of the young Rick Baker who is the real star of Dino's KING KONG. Not only did Baker create, arguably, the finest and most realistic ape-suit of its era, he also delivered a complex, much underrated pantomime performance as the title character. It is the sensitive and ultimately heartbreaking portrayal of Rick Baker that sold that second ticket, and made my high school girlfriend weep.

It's been a long time since that premiere, and recently I viewed the film on DVD. Then, I re-watched it again just to be sure. Dino's KING KONG doesn't hold up very well. The same weaknesses I perceived back then are even more obvious today, but Rick Baker's monster gorilla is still affecting and charismatic.

This time I made a special point to look very carefully for Forry, scrutinizing all of the fleeing crowd scenes. Sadly, his cameo continued to elude me, and I never spotted him, at least not for certain. Still, it's somehow comforting to know that Forry's ghost is in there, somewhere, amid all the big-budget make-believe chaos.

He probably had the time of his life.

— Martin Powell

KING KONG

(1976) Directed by John Guillermin; written by Marjorie C. Cooper, Edgar Wallace, James Ashmore Creelman, Ruth Rose and Lorenzo Semple Jr.; produced by Dino De Laurentiis, Federico De Laurentiis and Christian Ferry.

FORREST J ACKERMAN Fleeing Extra in Crowd



In what will no doubt be remembered as his finest performance, Forry stares impassively at the proceedings of the Courtroom segment of KENTUCKY FRIED MOVIE.

kentucky fried movie

Blink and you'll miss Forry as a juror in the two-part Courtroom sketch, one of the more absurd bits in this hit-and-miss collection of lowbrow pop culture parodies from Jim Abrahams and the Zucker Brothers (AIRPLANE!) and director John Landis. FJA isn't required to do much more than appear thoughtful, but with his smart suit and dapper mustache, he certainly has the look required for the bit which skewers late '50s-early '60s "you are here" TV; Zucker completists/obsessives will note the presence of their mother, Charlotte and sister, Susan Breslau, in the jury box with Forry.

The rest of the film is as messy and dumb and hilarious as it seemed to theatergoers 30 (!) years ago; teenage boys (its key audience) will still appreciate the abundant flesh and garbage pail gags like DANGER SEEKERS and the faux trailer for CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS IN TROUBLE (with appropriately explosive voiceover by New World Pictures pitchman Ron Gans), while the subtler sketches—the Unified Appeal for the Dead, with a stone-faced Henry Gibson offering advice on how to keep the recently deceased in one's life—retain their sly wit. And for those who feel the need to check off a list of psychotronic personalities in every film they watch, KFM offers a rogues' gallery of drive-in stars, from Marilyn Joi (as Cleopatra Schwartz) and former James Bond George Lazenby to Felix Silla, Uschi Digard, Phillip and Simon Rhee and Rick Baker (the gorilla who goes berserk in A.M. TODAY).

KENTUCKY FRIED MOVIE was the second of four appearances Forry made in projects by John Landis, the first being his feature debut, SCHLOCK (1973); he later turned up in the music video for Michael Jackson's THRILLER (1983; Forry is a patron at the theater where Michael and Ola Ray have their movie date) and KFM's sort-of sequel, AMAZON WOMEN

ON THE MOON (1987), though frequent Landis/Zucker producer Robert K. Weiss directed his segment (the delirious title sketch). One supposes that Landis returned the favor by turning up as Astronaut #1 in the Forry-penned VAMPIRELLA (1996).

— Paul Gaita

KENTUCKY FRIED MOVIE

(1977) Directed by John Landis; written by David Zucker, Jim Abrahams and Jerry Zucker; produced by Kim Jorgensen, Larry Kastruff and Robert K. Weiss.

FORREST J ACKERMAN Jurist (segment "Courtroom")

the howling

The pleasures of Joe Dante's revisionist werewolf pic THE HOWLING are many and varied, and one of its most amusing also features our own beloved Ackermonger. While searching for information about shape shifters, second-string heroes Belinda Balaski and Dennis Dugan happen upon an occult shop run by one Walter Paisley (Dick Miller, natch). While dispelling the Hollywood version of werewolves as so much movie baloney, Paisley keeps peeling a fisheye at a customer (Forry) who can't keep his hands off some tarot cards. WP finally gives him the "this isn't a library" rap, which prompts an Edgar Buchanan-worthy eye roll from our hero, who turns his back to the camera, revealing a fistful of FMs. Now that, ladies and gentleman, is how one does product placement.

FJA's appearance in THE HOWLING is almost a given, since it's a stem-to-stern tribute to movie werewolves of yore, with references to everyone from WOLF MAN director George Waggner and Jacinto Molina/Paul Naschy to the Big Bad Wolf. Since Forry



Dick Miller gives Forry advice on handling rare books in THE HOWLING. As we know, he didn't need it.

spent most of his adult life reminding monster kids like Joe Dante and special effects artist Rob Bottin about just how special these creature features were (and are) in the pages of FM, it only makes sense that he'd be a part of the pop culture parade that dots nearly every frame of this film. Oh, and Forry wears one hell of a flash shirt in his scene, nearly out-paisleying Walter Paisley himself.

— Paul Gaita

THE AFTERMATH

(1982) Directed by Steve Barkett; written by Steve Barkett, based on the story by Steve Barkett and Stanley Livingston; produced by Steve Barkett and Ted V. Mikels.

FORREST J ACKERMAN The Curator

THE HOWLING

(1981) Directed by Joe Dante; written by John Soyles and Terence H. Winkless, based on the novel by Gary Brandner; produced by Daniel H. Blat, Rob Bottin, Jack Conrad, Michael Finnell and Steven A. Lane.

FORREST J ACKERMAN Bookstore Customer

the aftermath

This is another one of those "end of the world" films that riffs a bit of PLANET OF THE APES with a dash of MAD MAX (if these films had been made for \$1.98). The auteur responsible is super fan Steve Barkett who wrote the story and then made the making of this film his obsession for years until it was finally in the can.

It is a family affair since his wife and children all have part in it and to get this party started, Steve made the pilgrimage to the Ackermansion, for wisdom—and of course to recruit The Ackermonger for a mandatory cameo. By 1982, this was a commonplace occurrence in the life of our dear FJA.

His role in this fits like one of the gloves on Dr. Gogol's metallic hand. Forry is the keeper of the flame in a world without end or cable. How perfectly cast is that? There is a certain irony here since, at the time of filming this epic, Forry was entertaining every possibility to find his collection a permanent home. At least on film this goal is achieved, and Forry is the final custodian in an apocalyptic world with a memory for detail and wonderment not unlike Peter Ustinov's Old Man in LOGAN'S RUN.

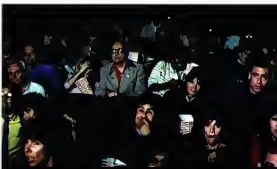
Some of the people behind the camera were destined for greatness: both the Oscar winning Skotack brothers were in attendance, working what magic they could with no money; and Jim Danforth (another Oscar winner) was there as well. My best memory of being involved in this at its inception was driving around Hollywood with writer/producer/director/star Steve Barkett, who was armed at all times—talk about your MAD MAX—a film for the ages.

— David DelValle

thriller

THRILLER was a milestone in the career of one of modern pop's greatest and most visible stars. Michael Jackson's THRILLER album became the most successful recording in the young singer's career, eclipsing his remaining body of work and reigning triumphant for years to come as the best selling album in record history, a distinction held for many years after its initial release. The title track held an eerie fascination for its predominantly youthful target audience, focusing on an occult occurrence in which the wholesome rocker turns into a werewolf. As a crossover recording, its appeal was both universal and unprecedented. With a narration by horror icon Vincent Price within the framework of the song, the astonishing hit reached daringly across genres, transcending a mere popular recording, while attracting adoring millions of additional fans of horror and the supernatural.

When Jackson sought to expand his horizons by turning the macabre title track into a best selling music video, he chose acclaimed motion picture director John Landis to guide the lavish production toward stratospheric commercial heights. The resultant film short, often referred to as "the most groundbreaking video of all time", would help turn the traditional music video into a virtual art form all its own. Landis had already achieved wide audience recognition with NATIONAL LAMPOON'S ANIMAL HOUSE in 1978, THE BLUES BROTHERS in 1980 and, perhaps most significantly, the hugely popular



The King of Pop finally moves out of the way to give us an unobstructed view of the #1 Monster Fan in the longform music video THRILLER.

AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON in 1981. He seemed the natural choice then, for a director to helm the filming of Michael Jackson's ambitious THRILLER video. He would go on to helm the disastrous segment of TWILIGHT ZONE: THE MOVIE in which actor Vic Morrow and several Vietnamese children were killed by the careening blades of a helicopter propeller later that same year. However, for the filming of THRILLER, the Landis magic was still intact.

The actual short film would run some thirteen minutes, with elaborate production values, exuberant dancing and a visually arresting depiction of lycanthropic transformation. Although Jackson's universal appeal seem to rest predominantly with a more youthful demographic target audience, the THRILLER production was decidedly horrific in its depiction of teenage purity becoming savaged by supernatural decadence. Landis brought his particular expertise to the production with his signature visual style, combining music, horror and comedy.

Retaining the chillingly familiar vocal styling of gifted actor Vincent Price on the soundtrack, Landis would add another subliminal bit of character casting with the participation of his friend and mentor, Forrest J. Ackerman. Forry obviously relished his brief cameo appearance in what would soon become a landmark short film in the history of modern popular music. Seated directly behind star Michael Jackson in a darkened movie theater, Forry lovingly hammed it up with a joyous, if silent, addition to his larger body of guest film appearances. He can be seen only for a single, precious moment in the final music video, appearing stunned by unseen visual graphics upon the hidden motion picture screen, while hungrily devouring a hefty bag of popcorn. While seemingly forgotten for tribute by The Academy of Motion Picture Arts And Sciences, the brief appearance by beloved fantasy icon Forrest J. Ackerman, in one of the most recognizable popular music videos in modern history, remains a jewel in the crown of a legendary production.

— Steve Vertlieb

THE BIRDS or JOHN CARPENTER'S THE THING, becoming FRED OLEN RAY'S SCALPS (or better, FRED OLEN RAY'S SCALP), one might just have something to talk about. Ray himself, in interviews, has blamed the distributor as responsible for SCALPS' incoherent and jumbled narrative and visual style. Ray re-released the film on DVD through his own Retromedia Company almost twenty years later. In the end, it remains a throw-away contender in the slasher/body count sub-genre of the 1980s, and a greatly missed opportunity in the under-explored Native American ghost film genre.

Supernatural and ghost films that tap into Native American mythology for the source of their stories often fall under a couple of broad categories, all of them essentially "revenge" pictures. The revenge of mistreated Indians, or wronged Indians or simply the disrespect shown to sacred burial ground is enough to start the body count climbing in a horror picture. One immediately thinks of pictures like POLTERGEIST and THE NIGHT STALKER TV episode entitled BAD MEDICINE. Horror film scholars have even pulled Kubrick's THE SHINING screaming and kicking into the sub-genre, pointing to the Native American design motifs that are all over the Overlook Hotel (and the comment made earlier by a character that the while the hotel was built, the construction crews had to ward off Indian attacks). At least THE MANITOU tried to do something a bit different with the material, having the re-constituted, vengeful shaman return via a boil on Susan Strasberg's neck. So, Fred Olen Ray's film isn't about his scalp (too bad—it could've been a surface forerunner to BEING JOHN MALKOVICH or something...) but about good old fashioned Red Indian revenge and collecting the scalps of trespassers.

The act of scalping isn't confined to just Native Americans, by the way. Peoples throughout history and from all over the world practiced scalping their enemies from time to time, as a method of torture or in order to obtain a trophy and prove that a foe was vanquished. Early white New Englanders paid a nice bounty to the indigenous population for trophy scalps. But as holidays were about all used up

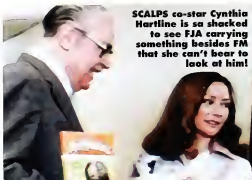
THRILLER

(1983) Directed by John Landis; written by John Landis and Michael Jackson; produced by George Falsely Jr., Michael Jackson and John Landis.

FORREST J. ACKERMAN Man in Theater

scalps

There is a missed opportunity here. Had the film a possessive title, à la ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S



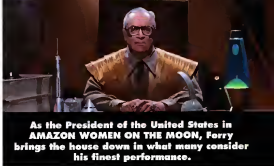
SCALPS co-star Cynthia Hartline is so shocked to see FJA carrying something besides FM that she can't bear to look at him!

for film titles by 1983 (HALLOWEEN, MY BLOODY VALENTINE, HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO ME), bloody body parts will do just fine as titles for the indiscriminate gore hound, thanks.

By the 1980s, the direct-to-video market was flourishing and a distributor could make real money putting out anything that fed the emerging gore fan base. FANGORIA magazine appeared in 1979 and after searching for its own identity in a number of early issues—breaking away from sister publication STARLOG—soon found and served an audience that wasn't getting their fill of flowing bodily fluids and mutilation. With this audience ready, willing and able to spend their dough at the local mom & pop video store, pictures like SCALPS were a safe enough bet to make a buck.

Shot on film for very little money by Fred Olen Ray, SCALPS tells the tale of a group of college students who stumble across a nasty evil spirit in the desert and the nasty evil spirits attempt to possess them or kill them (or both), one by one. On the plus side is plenty of spooky desert atmosphere, and a few creepy images and sounds (the drum tattoo, in particular) to seep into your nightmares. But as director Ray has explained, the images are not in places he intended, with the end result diluted of any real tension or surprise. Notable for its cameo appearances early in the film by Forry Ackerman, Carol Borland (of MARK OF THE VAMPIRE fame from 1935) and the first movie Superman, Kirk Alyn (it is Alyn's last film), Fred Olen Ray would not gain true notoriety until HOLLYWOOD CHAINSAW HOOKERS in 1988.

— Mark Redfield



looked and sounded like these 50s space operas with lush Eastman color, slices and burns in the film stock and very bad acting. Steve Forrest (Dana Andrews' brother) plays the space commander who leads his men with a monkey in tow into a world without end or men to speak of. The Queen of the planet is buxom Sybil Danning (HOWLING PART TWO). Among the crew is John Travolta's brother Joey, who is given the segments one funny line—as he steps off the ship he removes his space helmet, noticing the air is breathable he then observes "good ol' H₂O".

The homage is non stop for the films of the 50s, as the crew wears the costumes of the space cadets in FORBIDDEN PLANET and mouth the dialogue of thread bare programmers of the day. Forry is seen on their TV monitors as our fearless leader and this is of course, the defining moment for all we baby boomers to see the editor of Famous Monsters finally calling the shots for Earth. John Landis has created a valentine for geeks and time has been somewhat kind to it in many ways. He did not direct the wrap around; that was left to Robert K Weiss. In fact the film has five directors; Joe Dante, Peter Horton, Carl Gottlieb and John Landis.

Many fans have their own favorite episodes, mine being the SON OF THE INVISIBLE MAN with Ed Begley, Jr. as the Invisible one who really isn't at all, which makes for a lot of laughs. William Marshall (BLACULA) shines in the Video Pirate sequence which is pure 80s as is the rest of the bits and pieces that make up this trippy salute to late night movie watchers who just happened to grow up with a certain magazine edited by a certain gentleman known as Forry Ackerman; the President of the free world at least in our dreams.

— David DelValle

SCALPS

(1983) Directed by Fred Olen Ray; written by T.L. Lankford, Fred Olen Ray and John Ray; produced by T.L. Lankford, Tim McConies, Ralph Stevens and Alec Wisner.

FORREST J ACKERMAN Prof. Trentwood

amazon women on the moon

Somewhere in an alternative universe Forry J Ackerman is the President of the United States and Sybil Danning has the lead in a movie.

This is the world of AMAZON WOMEN ON THE MOON; a sequel of sorts to director John Landis's KENTUCKY FRIED MOVIE only with bigger stars in bigger cameos. The idea was to send up films like QUEEN OF OUTER SPACE and FIRE MAIDENS FROM OUTER SPACE with a wrap around device that

AMAZON WOMEN ON THE MOON

(1987) Directed by Robert K. Weiss; written by Michael Barrie and Jim Mulholland; produced by George Folley Jr., Robb Kelle, John Landis, Kevin Marcy and Robert K. Weiss.

FORREST J ACKERMAN U.S. President

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the ackermonster meets the evil spawn

Stepping into the director's chair halfway through filming, director Kenneth J. Hall remembers figuring out what to do with Uncle Forry.

—Jessie Lilley

As with many stories about the movie industry, my first directing assignment was a case of pure happenstance. I ran into a producer at a party who started making a movie with Bobbie and Frank Bresee and had subsequently lost interest in the project. He was familiar with my work as a writer as well as my makeup effects background but, most importantly, he knew I wanted to direct.

The next thing I knew, I was up at the Bresees' house in the Hollywood Hills for a get acquainted meeting. They were both charming and we hit it off right away. Bobbie had starred in MAUSOLEUM and done a cameo in GHOULIES at that time. They were looking for a new vehicle for her. In addition to putting up half the budget, they were offering their magnificent home as a shooting location.

I cobbled together a script around footage that had already been shot, trying to come up with something that made sense and could be shot on a micro-budget. Setting most of the film at the Bresees' was one way to control costs (not to mention avoid permits). However, this created a dilemma when Bobbie asked if we could put Forry in the picture. They were friends and he had given her lots of good press. By this time, everything left to be done was at the house and there wasn't anything like a party scene where he could be worked into the background.

I remembered we were doing a sequence where Bobbie is out lounging on her deck. The solution was to put Forry in the background cleaning the pool. So, there was the editor of the magazine that inspired me to get into this crazy business, wearing a Hawaiian shirt, working for me as the world's oldest pool-boy! That was almost as surreal as holding John Carradine's cue cards on THE TOMB!

I still get Christmas cards from the Bresees and saw them at Forry's memorial service. After all these years, I still feel like a true Monster Kid living out his dreams.

EVIL SPAWN

(1987) Directed by Kenneth J. Hall and Ted Newsom; written by Kenneth J. Hall and Ted Newsom; produced by Frank Bresee, Tony Brewster, Chris J. Candan, Gary J. Levinson and Fred Olen Ray.

FORREST J ACKERMAN Pool Man

curse of the queerwolf

CURSE OF THE QUEERWOLF

(1988) Directed by Mark Pirro; written by Mark Pirro; produced by Sergio Bandera, Mark Pirro and Brian J. Smith.

FORREST J ACKERMAN Mr. Richardson

the return of the living dead part II

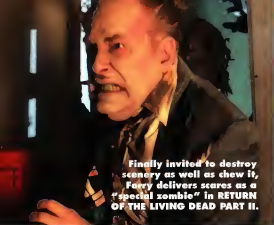
The lasting success of Dan O'Bannon's film RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD paved the way for this harmless Horror comedy sequel, which retuned with some of the original characters from the first film (like Jimmy Karen) but not its writer director.

Ken Wiederhorn took over the task of directing the zombies in this first of many sequels to O'Bannon's cult favorite. It is so right then that Forry should have a cameo in this one because the writers made such a point of sending up Michael Jackson's THRILLER video with a frat house degree of homage. It makes sense for Forry, who was an on screen character in his friend John Landis' music video, to make his presence known (it brings a certain continuity back at ya) as Harvey Kramer, a zombie for all seasons expertly made up by Kenny Myers. The night I visited the set with producer Tom Fox Forry was already made up in his zombie state sipping an iced coffee with his fellow younger zombies.

What, you may ask, was the topic of Forry's conversation? The Ackermonger was entertaining one and all with his recollection of sitting with Bela Lugosi



The seemingly thankless role of Mr. Richardson in CURSE OF THE QUEERWOLF actually allowed FJA to deliver the film's most naturalistic dialogue.



Finally invited to destroy scenery as well as chew it, Farry delivers scares as a special zombie in RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD PART II.

in the early 50s, as Bela's wife Lillian described how they made Bela's eyes light up in WHITE ZOMBIE "the grandfather of all zombie films". You see they put two shafts of light through card board and then shone them directly on to Bela's pupils. Tom Fox remarked after hearing this, "Whoa! That zombie is a keeper!"

— David DelValle

THE RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD PART II

(1988) Directed by Ken Wiederhorn; written by Ken Wiederhorn; produced by Eugene C. Cushman, Tom Fox and William S. Gilmore.

FORREST J ACKERMAN Harvey Kramer (Special Zombie)

the wizard of speed and time

Whatever happened to Mike Jittlov?

Like the Wizard of Speed and Time himself, Mike Jittlov appeared, seemingly out of the blue. A flash of green blurring passed, topped with a grinning, leering visage, stopping only a nanosecond to charm and to dazzle us for a brief moment in time, only to vanish over the horizon in a streak of light, never to be seen again.

— Jessie Lilley

In the pre-internet 1970's, before "instant gratification" really knew what "instant" was, filmmaker and animator Mike Jittlov was becoming something of a celebrity on the science fiction and film festival circuits. These were the olden days of photo-chemical film for the masses. Super 8MM Film Magazine, paperbacks like Jerry Lewis's THE TOTAL FILMMAKER and Lenny Lipton's film manual was gulped down by budding filmmakers in every town across the USA. Yes, people were making an inordinate amount of backyard crap, just like in today's ever-so-easy digital-video and YouTube days. Friends and family cast

in parts, playing characters too young to be believable; clumsy editing and poor lighting; spoofs, satires and parodies. But once in a while a film and filmmaker would come along and just wow 'em. Mike Jittlov was one of those filmmakers.

He began his film journey by taking an animation class in college in order to fulfill a course requirement. Falling in love with the art of animation, and having the innate temperament to stick with it, Jittlov went on to make several short films that filled the heart with joy. SWING SHIFT replayed the oft-told theme of inanimate objects coming to life long after working hours, but set to music and done with a spirit that got the toes a-tappin' and put a smile on the face. FASHIONATION, set to Petula Clark's I KNOW A PLACE is a crowd-pleaser that primarily uses cut-out animation techniques. Stop-motion animation, cut-out animation, pixilation and optical effects created with a homemade animation stand were Jittlov's drugs of choice. He poured his heart and imagination into his vivid film dreams, and sharing these short films with us in darkened auditoriums and convention hotel ballrooms across the country, got us hooked too.

What you've heard about the man is true. Making his appearances at science fiction conventions around the country, Mike Jittlov always wore his trade-marked lime green windbreaker. The same goes for his green shoes. His flashing eyes betrayed intelligence and humor. His smile, often more a leer, brought to mind a grinning flesh-colored Green Goblin. Jittlov was a contradictory combination of stand-offishness and warm generosity personified. He never shook hands with anyone. He was a character. He was eccentric. Fans loved him and his films. His films made people feel good.

THE WIZARD OF SPEED AND TIME began life as a short. (I believe I met Jittlov and saw his pre-WIZARD films with a group of people in late 1976, the very same evening that I saw a show reel and trailer for STAR WARS, presented by Gary Kurtz. You can imagine the joyous frenzy the crowd was in that night. Special effects and [literal] flying flights of fantasy ruled that night).

Jittlov's short film, THE WIZARD OF SPEED AND TIME from 1979, tells the plot-less tale of the titular wizard, played by Jittlov himself clad in a green wizard robe the very same shade of green as his ubiquitous windbreaker and sneakers, running, racing and flying around the globe righting wrongs, spreading smiles & love and making us laugh along the way, until—abruptly ending his whirl-wind world tour—the wizard's trip is comically capped when, once he has reached maximum

speed, he slips on a banana peel which sends him up into the stratosphere and he crashes back on earth. Landing in a garage, The Wizard sings a song explaining who he is, while making the tools of the animator's trade dance for us. As a possible prediction of Jittlov's near-future career, the little three minute film is prescient, to say the least.

Then the Disney Company came a-calling. It seemed like this would be a perfect fit. The magician who needed an audience and the funding to make his magic now would have a patron who could deliver both. Jittlov's short was shown on The Wonderful World of Disney as part of an episode that highlighted special effects. The year before, Jittlov made a special short for the Disney Company, and he is the first person to animate a stop-motion Mickey Mouse in *MOUSE MANIA*, which aired as part of Disney's 50th Anniversary tribute to their mascot. The relationship between the animator and the House of Mouse was bitter-sweet, and by this point in his career, the iconoclastic animator had had a taste of Hollywood and that was bitter, too.

The result was a feature-length version of *WIZARD* shot in 1983. Expanding the original short, the feature became a "making-of" ordeal and the trials and tribulations of making a film in Hollywood, instead its own magical, self-contained adventure about a mysterious, magical wizard. And therein lies the main problem with the feature, not released until 1988, primarily on VHS and Laser.

Films about the making of films rarely work for a general audience. Movies about over-night successes, stars discovered and miraculously picked and plucked from obscurity for stardom and underdogs overcoming adversity have been popular, but only when the popular mythology is played out to create magic without a trace of sourness. The bitterness in *THE WIZARD OF SPEED AND TIME* comes through loud and clear and that is what taints the magic in Jittlov's very special film. It's palpable and threatens to weight the film and sink it, especially the moments where it seems particularly preachy.

Running at 95 minutes, the film follows The Man in The Green Jacket (Jittlov, who is also credited as directing as "The Man in The Green Jacket"), as he attempts to make a film much like *WIZARD*. Along the way, he and his friends are thwarted at every step by unscrupulous producers and indifferent union reps. Many of these scenes have a lifeless, leaden quality. The humor is sometimes heavy-handed and a strange, unhappy, creeping sense of entitlement becomes apparent, making the character of the aspiring filmmaker somewhat unappealing. It is the brief moments when Jittlov's animation genius is

cut loose and given full flight that the film soars. The re-shot version of the actual *WIZARD* is marvelous and large chunks of some of Jittlov's earlier short films are incorporated into the feature, such as *TIME TRIPPER* and *ANIMATO*. Had *THE WIZARD OF SPEED AND TIME* been a total fantasy of the enigmatic, mysterious Wizard and a series of picaresque adventures in the world, and the entire "movie making" plot been avoided, the picture—perhaps—would've worked better for general audiences and possibly be better remembered than by its current cult status.

A better known film that seems to borrow *WIZARD*'s structure and some key elements (like toy collections and an ersatz Rube Goldberg-like device) and plays its man-child hero to better effect is Tim Burton's *PEE-WEE'S BIG ADVENTURE* from 1985. But *PEE-WEE*, it should be noted, was made and released after *WIZARD* was shot and before it was released to the public.

The film has yet to be released on DVD due to complicated legal rights issues that have never been made entirely clear. But Jittlov himself has approved file-sharing of the picture on the internet. Indeed, all of his films can be viewed on the web, but it's not the ideal way to experience his magic. Seek out a VHS copy if you can. Eagle-eyed viewers will note the familiar face of pre-*MIAMI VICE* star Philip Michael Thomas, and cameos by Forry Ackerman and animators Ward Kimball and Jim Danforth.

—Mark Redfield

THE WIZARD OF SPEED AND TIME

(1988) Directed by Mike Jittlov; written by Mike Jittlov; produced by Devin Chierighino, Mike Jittlov and Richard Kaye.

FORREST J ACKERMAN Mustached Man at Garage Sale

the laughing dead

THE LAUGHING DEAD

(1989) Directed by Samtow Sucharitkul; written by Mark Pirro; produced by Lex Nakashima.

FORREST J ACKERMAN Corpse #1

my mom's a werewolf

MY MOM'S A WEREWOLF

(1989) Directed by Michael Fisch; written by Samtow Sucharitkul; produced by Brian J. Smith, Marilyn Jacobs Tenser and Steven J. Wolfe.

FORREST J ACKERMAN (uncredited)

transylvania twist

Director Jim Wynorski took time from the set to recall working with Forrest J Ackerman on three different films. Here he remembers the first time they worked together.

—Jessie Lilley

The first time I used Forry in a movie was in 1989 in **TRANSYLVANIA TWIST**. He played an assistant undertaker and of course he was doing his famous Forry smirks and carrying around a copy of **FAMOUS MONSTERS** in his hand. I felt good doing it because it gave the film a touch of luck. It was a tribute to all fans of monster movies, and this was a way of giving a nod to the person who had generated my original interest in horror movies.

This film was a parody of all kinds of films. Forry was in a ton of films and directing him was like working with any other guy. You know, "Forry, you stand here and do this." And he would do it.

TRANSYLVANIA TWIST

(1989) Directed by Jim Wynorski; written by R.J. Robertson and Jim Wynorski; produced by Alicia Camp and Roger Corman.

FORREST J ACKERMAN Funeral Director

my lovely monster

MY LOVELY MONSTER

(1990) Directed by Michael Bergmann; written by Forrest J Ackerman and Michael Bergmann; produced by Michael Bergmann, Wolf-Dietrich Brückner and Christa Vogel.

FORREST J ACKERMAN The Master

hard to die

Jim Wynorski is back with more memories and a tip of the hat to Uncle Forry.

—Jessie Lilley

The second time I used Forry was 1990 when I was making a film called **HARD TO DIE** which was a sequel to **SORORITY HOUSE MASSACRE II**. Forry played a museum curator and had a substantial part. I made him a Vietnam War hero and some of the stuff he says is outlandish but it was a lot of fun working with him on that day.

Forry played a substantial character in this film, I think he had at least two scenes—he was the guy who explained

the whole thing and his performance is wildly over the top and he's very entertaining. The entire movie was over the top, so I didn't mind letting Forry go. He speaks in his Forry style—which is unmistakable—and that of course made it fun for me.

I was influenced by Ackerman a lot. The first time I saw my name in print was in, I think, issue #25 of **FAMOUS MONSTERS**—it was **THE OUTER LIMITS** issue. He came to New York and I met him at the **FAMOUS MONSTERS** con. He was a guy who really sparked interest in monsters and giant creatures and for me—it stuck. I always thanked him for that.

HARD TO DIE

(1990) Directed by Jim Wynorski; written by Mark Thomas McGee and J.B. Rogers; produced by Jonathan Wintrey and Jim Wynorski.

FORREST J ACKERMAN Dr. Ed Newton

nudist colony of the dead

NUDIST COLONY OF THE DEAD

(1991) Directed by Mark Pirro; written by Mark Pirro; produced by Mark Headley, Braddan Mendelson, Tam Noygrow and Phil Vigeant.

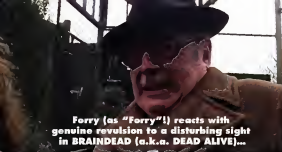
FORREST J ACKERMAN Judge Rhinehart

braindead

Known in the US by the title **DEAD ALIVE**, Peter Jackson's gore-filled romp of a plague-infested rat monkey, shipped to a New Zealand zoo, who infects an innocent old woman, transforming her into a ravenous, murderous brain-dead "zombie" (her luckless son Lionel, desperately struggles to keep his mum, and the ever-growing population of brain-dead zombies in check), is an eye-opener.

For contemporary audiences who only know Peter Jackson's **LORD OF THE RINGS** films or **KING KONG** (2005), and revel in these flights of fantasy, wonder, heart, tenderness and rousing adventure, the frenetic and anarchic action of **BRAINDEAD** can come as a shock; and it still packs a punch and an entertaining wallop today.

The story is by Stephen Sinclair, with the screenplay by Sinclair, Jackson and long-time collaborator Fran Walsh. **BRAINDEAD** follows two of Jackson's earlier efforts, **BAD TASTE** (1987) about nasty aliens looking to humans as the food source for their fast food needs, and **MEET THE FEEBLES** (1989), a version of the muppets



Ferry (as "Ferry!") reacts with genuine revulsion to a disturbing sight in **BRAINDEAD** (a.k.a. **DEAD ALIVE**)...



...and then, like all good tourists, documents this part of his vacation.

world turned upside down, inside out and on its head. These three films all make Jackson's intentions clear at this stage of his career: make something loud, shocking and funny. Make a calling card film that will get him noticed. It got him noticed.

Owing much to the spirit of Sam Raimi's **EVIL DEAD 2: DEAD BY DAWN** (1987), Jackson's film ups the ante with gore and body parts that come alive and seem to have wills of their own. And if Ash in **EVIL DEAD** is good with a chainsaw, Lionel in **BRAINDEAD** is a maestro with a mower and has to be seen to be believed. Fast paced, genuinely funny and stomach turning by caroming, unpredictable turns, **BRAINDEAD** stars Timothy Balme as the put-upon Lionel Cosgrove. A performance that turns easily on a dime from broad slapstick to subtle character comedy, Balme's work anchors a film that always threatens to spin out of control, over the top and into orbit—but never does.

The effects are top notch for the style of the film, and for those fans who bemoan the over-use of CGI blood in modern films with copious blood-letting, **BRAINDEAD** is the prescribed medicine: gallons flow, spurt and gush with glee, all of it real fake blood, and not fake fake blood. Pity the poor production assistants charged with mopping up.

Peter Jackson was an unabashed fan of *Famous Monsters Magazine*. Like many cinefantasists before and since, the magazine and its editor Forrest Ackerman had a profound influence on the budding New Zealand filmmaker. In fact, when Jackson, at the old-ripe age of 12 made his first trip abroad to England, he secretly wrote a will that left everything he had collected to Ferry! Years later, a couple of months before **BRAINDEAD** was to begin shooting, Jackson discovered that Ackerman was to be a guest at a New Zealand SF convention. Wasting no time, Jackson persuaded a very willing Ackerman to don a fifties-era fedora and coat, and shot a few silent reaction shots of Ferry the Actorman in the Wellington Zoo, reacting to mayhem that Jackson wouldn't lens for weeks. An alert guard chased them out, but not before Jackson had his idol's cameo in the can.

Released on video in the US as **DEAD-ALIVE**, the picture won a Saturn award from the Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror Films for "Best Genre Video Release" in 1994, recognizing it as the fan favorite that it was and still is. Jackson cut his feature-length teeth with **TASTE**, **FEEBLES** and **BRAINDEAD**, but it's **BRAINDEAD** that finds and holds new audiences lucky enough to discover and embrace its madness and humor. Fans of the film have long wanted a sequel. What they got instead was Peter Jackson.

A sequel now from Jackson would surely be a let-down. Chances are that, if there is a sequel, it would only be one produced by Jackson, and not written or directed by him. He's moved on, and chances of catching lightning in a bottle again are remote. But we'll always have **BRAINDEAD** and be able to share this crazy, hilarious vision with unsuspecting friends who've never seen it, but have only seen, say, **THE LOVELY BONES** (2009).

— Mark Redfield

BRAIN DEAD

(1992) Directed by Peter Jackson; written by Stephen Sinclair, Fran Walsh and Peter Jackson, based on the story by Stephen Sinclair; produced by Jim Booth and Jamie Selkirk.

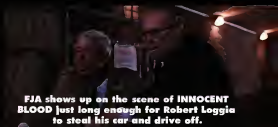
FORREST J ACKERMAN Ferry

innocent blood

INNOCENT BLOOD

(1992) Directed by John Landis; written by Michael Walk; produced by Leslie Belzberg, Lee Rich, Jonathan Sheinberg and Michael Walk.

FORREST J ACKERMAN Stolen Car Man



FJA shows up on the scene of **INNOCENT BLOOD** just long enough for Robert Loggia to steal his car and drive off.

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ceremony

CEREMONY

(1994) Directed by Joe Castro; written by Rudy Balli and Joe Castro; produced by Rex Hickok and Laura Meade.

FORREST J ACKERMAN Sylvia's Father

that little monster

THAT LITTLE MONSTER

(1994) Directed by Paul Bunnell; written by Paul Bunnell; produced by Merrill P. Mack, Carl Mastrorino and Cristina Casanova Schweitzer.

FORREST J ACKERMAN Edward Van Groom

beverly hills cop III

BEVERLY HILLS COP III

(1994) Directed by John Landis; written by Steven E. de Souza; produced by Leslie Belzberg, Mark Lipsky, Catherine Meyers, Ray Murphy Jr., Mace Neufeld and Robert Rehme.

FORREST J ACKERMAN Bar Patron

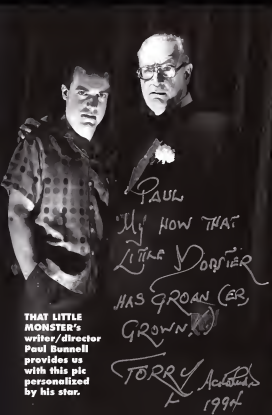
fred olen ray on directing forry

Brad Linaweaver was chatting with director Fred Olen Ray and asked him for a little something about our Uncle Forry to include in this issue. He very happily complied.

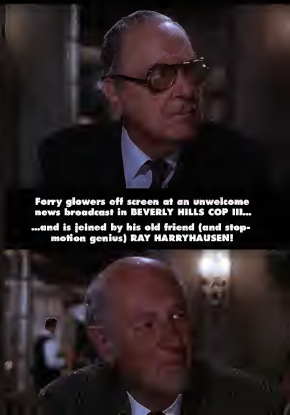
— Jessie Lilley

Ive worked with Forry six times. Let me see; he was in SCALPS, BEACH BLANKET BLOOD BATH, EVIL SPAWN (and he came back a year later and added to his role for THE ALIEN WITHIN version of that one); and then there's BIKINI DRIVE-IN and ATTACK OF THE 60 FOOT CENTERFOLD—so two of those times count as the same role, giving a total of five films.

Forry is wonderful. It's like that cross country tour where he offered to come to your house. It's like having Forry come visit on my movie set. I feel like the luckiest kid in the world. Incidentally, ATTACK OF THE 60 FOOT CENTERFOLD is the only time Forry is credited as Count Dracula in a film.



THAT LITTLE MONSTER's writer/director Paul Bunnell provides us with this pic personalized by his star.



Forry glowers off screen at an unwelcome news broadcast in BEVERLY HILLS COP III... ..and is joined by his old friend (and stop-motion genius) RAY HARRYHAUSEN!

attack of the 60 foot centerfold

The Bible and the movies share one thing in common: they both, occasionally, do a lot of "begetting". Sometimes the lineage remains strong and the children produced are healthy. More often than not, however, the gene pool becomes diluted and the resultant offspring is a mutation that survives and thrives only in a kind of Cinema Freak Show. That dark alley in the carnival of celluloid where the poster for the attraction can never live up to what it advertises, but we pay our money anyway, and lest we be thought a rube, we boast that we've seen it, and that yes, it's everything and more than what the poster promised. We know it's a fraud, but we've seen it and—we get it and love it for its fraud—we're part of the inner circle.

THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN (1957) begat THE AMAZING COLASSAL MAN (1957) begat ATTACK OF THE 50 FOOT WOMAN (1958) begat ATTACK OF THE 50 FOOT WOMAN (1993) begat Fred Olen Ray's ATTACK OF THE 60 FOOT CENTERFOLD (1995). A pruned list of "begats" to be sure, as there are many other mutants to be found, but this list will suffice for now.

This dizzying yo-yoing of incredible and amazing men and women, either shrinking to nothingness or growing to become rampaging giants, begins with the brilliant and profound Richard Matheson-scripted THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN (based on his novel). If a man shrinking into the void was cool, why not go the other way? Hence Bert I. Gordon's COLASSAL MAN, also from 1957, and its own bastard child, WAR OF THE COLASSAL BEAST (1958). The shrinking man never got a sequel. He was remade, however, as Lily Tomlin in 1983.

And if a giant man could attack and make war, why not (yet again) go the other way and make it a woman who attacks. Enter Allied Artist's contribution to the sub-genre with ATTACK OF THE 50 FOOT WOMAN (1958). Naturally, in 1958, a giant, attacking woman would not rail and wreak havoc on the world, but narrow her focus on something much more important, like her cheating husband. The film, starring Allison Hayes as the hapless femme who, after being touched by some mysterious alien force is turned into an attacking giantess, produced one of the best posters in exploitation history; a piece of advertising art that transcends the material itself. The film is also remembered (for those who've seen it—those who know) for the silliest giant prop hand that live

actors ever had to wrestle with (and do so with a straight face). Chock-full of un-realized themes and potential, ATTACK OF THE 50 FOOT WOMAN was re-made as a TV movie in 1993, starring Daryl Hannah and directed by Christopher Guest; Hannah, Guest, and teleplay writer Joseph Dougherty promptly gild the lily.

One imagines, and possibly correctly, that the indelible image of the original 50 FOOT WOMAN poster, and the (then) recent spectacle of a giant Daryl Hannah, wandering around in her beautiful giant bare feet kicking toy cars about, came together in filmmaker Fred Olen Ray's head and he thought, "Yes, we'll go the other way." He most likely thought the same thought that every red-blooded male ever thought since the first 50 foot woman: "imagine that giant woman—naked..."

And go the other way he did. Reversing the trend to delve into pseudo-feminist ideas that burble beneath the original or other remakes or parodies of the 50 foot (or shrinking) woman theme, Ray's film, ATTACK OF THE 60 FOOT CENTERFOLD (adding ten feet to the titular characters in a flourish of showmanship) tells the story of two models and their quest for bigger breasts in the competitive world of soft porn magazine publishing. The premise is simply a carnival promise to show what the viewer has only dared secretly dreamed about all these years: finally we'll see those bountiful butte-sized boobs (naked) and craterous canyon-like cooters (naked) on the screen! The film only half delivers on that fantasy. The film also delivers Tommy Kirk, Jay Richardson, Michelle Bauer, George Stover, Russ Tamblyn (!), Jim Wynorski and Forrest J Ackerman in supporting or cameo roles gamely keeping the comedy flying.

Starring J.J. North as one of the attacking centerfolds, the film was made and released in an awkward gray-zone of film distribution. The drive-in was long gone and the 1980's heyday of "make it and make money on VHS" was over; which left late-night cable and direct-to-video markets. What the film promises and what it delivers are two very different things, falling between two stools with a thud and never having the energy to get back on its feet. Fred Olen Ray has made films that reveal his love and knowledge of the horror and SF genres, and can be hugely entertaining. This isn't one of them. What 60 FOOT CENTERFOLD primarily lacks is heat. If there was anything actually erotic about it, instead of merely snickering and juvenile, it may have really been something big. Which then leads to this sobering question (bursting your fantasy bubble): what would one actually do with a 60 foot centerfold? The answer is probably the same as with a 5 foot, two inch centerfold...gaze at her

picture and deep down know that the fantasy can never really satisfy.

— Mark Redfield

ATTACK OF THE 60 FOOT CENTERFOLD

(1995) Directed by Fred Olen Ray; written by Steve Armogida; produced by Mike Elliott, Fred Olen Ray and Karen L. Spencers.

FORREST J ACKERMAN Dracula

bikini drive-in

BIKINI DRIVE-IN

(1995) Directed by Fred Olen Ray; written by Steve Armogida and John Willey; produced by Steve Armogida, John McCollister, Fred Olen Ray, John Lee Ray, Victoria Till, C. Scott Vataw and Jim Wynorski.

FORREST J ACKERMAN Man with Insect Repellent

dinosaur valley girls

Director Don Glut remembers the excitement and frustration of his first professional film shoot.

— Jessie Lilley

DINOSAUR VALLEY GIRLS was my first professional movie; I'd made a lot of amateur films in the past, but this was the first pro job. We shot it in 1994 and there's a reason that it was important to me to have Forry in there doing a cameo. I'd known him for many years and he'd promoted all my old amateur films in his magazines, as we were good friends. When he told me, by sheer coincidence, that he had just done his 49th film, I decided I wanted to be able to say that his 50th movie was my first.

DINOSAUR VALLEY GIRLS was just a silly, low-budget comedy that was based loosely on A CONNECTICUT YANKEE IN KING ARTHUR'S COURT. An actor is magically transported back to prehistoric times where he initiates a lot of changes and eventually finds himself back in the present. Of course, he had to go back because he's fallen in love with a cave girl.

It was a T&A movie, there were not nearly enough—in my estimation—topless shots; it had stop-motion dinosaurs in it and it was a fun, campy comedy. Unfortunately Forry's and my wires kept getting crossed and we were rescheduling constantly. Finally towards the end, I was starting to give up on him—I had envisioned a larger part than we wound up with, but as it turned out we didn't have the time. Then we had some pick-up shots to do and I took a chance that Forry might be free. It turned out

One might consider Forry to have stolen the show in this fuzzy scene from DINOSAUR VALLEY GIRLS...if one ignored all the actors who were on screen for longer than seven seconds.



that he was free that day. So he came down to the set on the last day and all I could do was to have him walk by a house, carrying a copy of FAMOUS MONSTERS against his chest where it would be prominently displayed. There was no dialogue, just a walk through but at least I had him in the film and I could say that Forrest J Ackerman's 50th film was my first professional film.

DINOSAUR VALLEY GIRLS

(1996) Directed by Donald F. Glut; written by Donald F. Glut; produced by Kevin M. Glover and Melodie Spevack.

FORREST J ACKERMAN Acker-Man on the Street

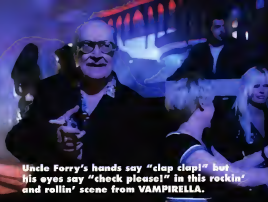
vampirella

Jim Wynorski has the distinction of being the man who put Forry in a film based on a character Forry created—Vampirella—and ultimately rescuing Forry from the cutting room floor... eventually.

— Jessie Lilley

The third and last time I worked with Forry was when he appeared in a cameo role in VAMPIRELLA, for two reasons; obviously because of my connection with him and of course because he had created the character. And you know it was a lot of fun.

I wanted to pay homage to him and work him into the film so that people in the know would recognize him and say, "Oh! There's Forry, the guy who created the character of Vampirella." He didn't have much to do in the film, but we flew him to Vegas and he appeared in a crowd scene when Roger Daltrey was singing BLEED FOR ME. Roger Corman, who produced the film, originally cut part of the song and that was where Forry appeared. So he wasn't in the VHS, but when it was restored on DVD, I put it all back together so you can see Forry in that version.



Uncle Fanny's hands say "clap clap!" but his eyes say "check please!" in this rockin' and rollin' scene from **VAMPIRELLA**.

Vampirella sprang from the boyish imagination of Forrest J Ackerman in the late 1960s. She has remained a favorite in boys' imaginations ever since. There is no age limit for the love of all things Vampi.

In the heyday of the Warren Publishing Empire, atop the success of **FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND** magazine, publisher James Warren launched a pair of magazine-sized, black and white horror comics called **EERIE** and **CREEPY**, respectively. Cousin Eerie and Uncle Creepy where characters created to host and introduce an anthology of horror stories; initially, that's what **VAMPIRELLA** was to be as well, but with fewer clothes on. Indeed, Vampirella's earliest appearance (**VAMPIRELLA** #1, September 1969) finds her taking a shower, an activity that wouldn't pack the same red-zone level of titillation had it been Uncle Creepy.

Vampirella's great-hot-grand-momma is, of course, Edgar Rice Burroughs' fabulous Martian creation, the Princess of Mars herself, Dejah Thoris. Created by Burroughs in the summer of 1911 before he wrote and published **TARZAN OF THE APES**, Burroughs described Dejah Thoris thusly, "She was as destitute of clothes as the green Martians who accompanied her; indeed, save for her highly wrought ornaments she was entirely naked, nor could any apparel have enhanced the beauty of her perfect and symmetrical figure."

When the serialized adventures of John Carter, Tars Tarkus and the fabulous Dejah Thoris are finally sold as a novel in 1917 (after the success of his **TARZAN** made him a bestselling author), Burroughs had let a genie out of the bottle that couldn't be put back, but would never really be translated successfully into the medium of film. With Dejah Thoris, here is a new pulp heroine; alien, strong-willed, a fighter—and, save for her head-dress, as naked as the day she was born. This fantasy of the "new woman"—liberated and standing strong with her fierce

warrior head held high—came roaring into the collective conscience at a time when (other than in Seattle) women in the United States struggled for the right to vote. Dejah Thoris would inspire other authors to create heroines in the sword and sorcery and sword and planet pulp literature, but the depictions of these heroines wouldn't remotely come close to what the authors described until the paperback booms of the 1950s and 1960s and the great revival of the works by Burroughs, Robert E. Howard and others; when illustrators like Frank Frazetta and Boris Vallejo gave them form in brilliant, powerful oil paintings. Mens' adventure magazines and paperbacks of the period never shirked on depicting scantily clad women, but they were mostly of the victim or damsel in distress variety. It would take a Frenchman, with a giggly sense of humor and nascent sexual-revolution ideas to punch through what was merely hinted at in Burroughs and deliver to us Barbarella.

BARBARELLA, a comic created by Jean-Claude Forest in 1962, was later published in book form in 1964 and created a small scandal because of its erotic content. Fairly tame and about on the level with **PLAYBOY** magazine's **LITTLE ANNIE FANNY** illustrated exploits, sci-fi fans knew of Barbarella and embraced her. Roger Vadim made a film that starred his third wife Jane Fonda based on the first volume of collected **BARBARELLA** comics in 1969. The Warren publication **VAMPIRELLA** debuted that same year.

Forrest J Ackerman had had success in the late 1960's with the introduction and publication of the juvenile space-opera series **PERRY RHODAN**. Ackerman helped bring this German SF pulp series to the attention of Ace Books in 1969 and some stories were translated by Ackerman's wife Wendayne. The championing of this series revealed (along with Ackerman's famous punning between the covers of **FAMOUS MONSTERS** as further evidence) affection for boys'-own type space fantasy and humor. All of these influences would funnel through Ackerman's brain to create the character of Vampirella.

Ackerman would only be directly involved creatively with a few stories and the shape of the content of **VAMPIRELLA** the magazine in the earliest issues. It would take the first ten issues to sort her out and develop her into something of a serious character; not merely a horror comic hostess with the most-ess who just happened to wear the least-ess. Among the writers who brought Vampirella to life in those exciting, envelope-pushing days of the liberated and progressive 1970's were Don Glut, Nicola Cuti, Bill Parente and Archie Godwin (also serving as editor). The first issue featured a cover by

the late Frank Frazetta and others who gave shape and form to Vampi included, Ken Kelly, Bill Hughes, Manuel Sanjulean and Jose Gonzalez (considered the premiere Vampirella artist).

The character became an icon (the "life size" portrait of Vampi for sale in the back of every Warren publication, painted by Jose "Pepe" Gonzalez, certainly helped) and by 1975 there was talk of a feature film based on the property. About this time, lucky fans would actually begin to meet Vampirella in the flesh at conventions around the country, brought to life by actresses and models like Barbara Leigh and Brinke Stevens (Stevens in the early '80's even looks a bit like Frazetta's first cover painting). At the Famous Monster Convention held in New York City, Forry Ackerman and Michael Carreras of Hammer Films announced a motion picture version, and an ad ran in Vampirella in issues # 47 and 48. By the early 1990s, Harris Publications took over the publication of Vampirella and re-vamped her origin and back story—and continued putting out magazines and comics. But would fans ever see a film featuring their beloved character? The answer would be no; which brings us to Jim Wynorski's film VAMPIRELLA from 1996.

Produced and released by Roger Corman's Concorde/New Horizon company and released direct-to-video, starring model Talisa Soto and The Who's Roger Daltrey, VAMPIRELLA stands as a monument of what can happen to a property when the makers don't have enough money to realize it properly, don't understand said property and adapt the property to film in an era struggling to recover from a previous era of sexual repression and political conservatism. If the 1969 film BARBARELLA makes and breaks a promise of taking a female character fully formed by the sexual revolution of a by-gone era and back-tracks to a pre-pubescent entertainment, the 1996 VAMPIRELLA film hurtles a like-themed character into pre-pubescent oblivion.

By the 1990's, Corman's new company was making up for quality (when there was quality) with quantity, pumping out direct-to-video movies at a reckless rate. As the print version of VAMPIRELLA pushed, pulled and stretched the character into all kinds of interesting directions, the film version avoids all of that with a forgettable origin story and special effects that can't rise to the occasion, as most shots are lifted from other Concorde/New Horizon films. The casting of the lovely Talisa Soto is another woe. The appearance of Vampirella and her costume in the film is the first disappointment. Soto, whose major break came with her second film, the James Bond adventure LICENSE TO KILL, just isn't up

to the task of carrying a lead. And the films greatest crime is that it is completely devoid of anything even slightly erotic. Finally, forget any progressive female perspective to enrich your teenage fantasies. You've not come a long way, baby.

The missed opportunities to bring Vampirella to the screen and the women who could've given her life in the past are endless. One imagines what a film starring the fabulous Caroline Munro as Vampirella would have been like in the proper creative hands, instead of the creaky and goofy STAR CRASH from 1979, where Munro played a derivative Barbarella-like character called Stella Star. Munro in the 70s had the beauty, the talent, the brains and the presence to pull off meatier roles in fantasy films. Look at her work as the assassin in THE SPY WHO LOVED ME, as a screen test for the lead in the same film and imagine what she would've brought to the character of Anya in that film. With all due respect to Barbara Bach, Munro would've been a stronger match for Roger Moore's Bond, for sure.

One can hold out hope for the future that a VAMPIRELLA film might one day get made, that combines the right balance of eroticism, giggles and a fully-fleshed out, three dimensional female (in more ways than one). But, then again, we never did get Dejah Thoris on the screen, and she's been around for almost a hundred years.

— Mark Redfield

VAMPIRELLA

(1996) Directed by Jim Wynorski; written by Gary Gerani, based on the comic book by Forrest J Ackerman; produced by Forrest J Ackerman, Mark Patrick Carducci, Roger Corman, Paul Hertzberg, Angela Plasschaert and Jim Wynorski.

FORREST J ACKERMAN Club Patron

future war

FUTURE WAR

(1997) Directed by Anthony Douglas; written by Dom Magwili, based on the story by David Huey and Dom Magwili; produced by Dave Eddy, David Huey and K.Y. Lim.

FORREST J ACKERMAN Park Victim

sadomannequin

Director Jim Torres called in to include his thoughts on his first meeting and working with Uncle Forry, in a very off-the-cuff manner.

— Jessie Lilley



The one and only Dr. Acula and his lovely co-star Christie Snodgrass (as Demona) from SADOMANNEQUIN.



Ferry prepares for his SADOMANNEQUIN closeup with writer/director Jim Torres.

I met Forrest Ackerman through a mutual friend named Terry Pace. I know Terry from my days at University of North Alabama over in Florence. Ferry and Ray Bradbury were coming to the Shoals area in May of 2004. There was a series of one-act plays called **THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF RAY BRADBURY** that the theatre group was performing at the time and that Terry was directing.

I was looking for a short film project to do, and Terry mentioned that as Ferry was going to be here, I needed to think of something so that maybe I could get a cameo with Ferry while he was in town. At the time, I didn't have a script—I didn't have anything. On Ferry's last day in town, he, Terry, me and my co-producer Cory Hannah were having breakfast together. I had my camera with me and after breakfast I took him into the lobby of the International House of Pancakes. I shot a little scene with him on a public payphone. Now I had to find a way to use this scene in a movie!

This idea for **SADOMANNEQUIN** had been rattling around in the back of my brain. It's about a haunted



warehouse where a mannequin creature rules over a collection of totems and memorabilia and artifacts of famous monsters and all kinds of wonderful things like that. So I have this security guard, first night on the job watching over this eccentric's collection of spooky goodies and his one rule is that he can't touch anything. Well, naturally he goes and messes with a trunk full of magazines and the full moon wakens this dominatrix-like character and she attacks him. In the midst of that, I worked in this cameo that I had shot with Forry. So in the middle of this 13 minute black & white homage to the classic horror films, we have this funny little scene with our beloved Uncle Forry.

It was a lot of fun working with him. And even though he wasn't there for the film shoot itself, just being around him and talking with him and maintaining a connection and then friendship with him was very special.

SADOMANNEQUIN

[2001] Directed by Jim Torres; written by Jim Torres; produced by Terry Pace, Jim Torres and Susannah Torres.

FORREST J ACKERMAN Dr. Acule

vampire hunters club

Director Don Glut recalls stepping in on an already-in-production film.

—Jessie Lilley

On VAMPIRE HUNTERS CLUB, I came in kind of late. The producers (Edward Plumb, Buddy Barnett and Kathe Duba-Barnett) had hired another director and they weren't happy with what he had done. The film had already been cast when they brought me in on the suggestion of Dan Roebuck who played Dracula in the film. A lot of it had already been shot and one of the things I noticed was that, in my opinion, the characters had no life. They sat in a room and said lines which were pretty much interchangeable; William Smith could have said Bob Burns' lines, Bob Burns could have said Forry's lines, etc. Now these particular men were iconic figures in the entertainment business and I wound up adding some of my own dialogue. The producers weren't always too happy with that, but I was trying to punch it up and make the dialogue reflect what fans knew those actors for. For instance, when William Smith arrived—and I was in awe of William Smith; I'm a huge fan of all those 70s biker films—I walked up to him and said, "Can you play this part as if you were a retired biker?" And he just hugged me, and said, "Thanks, man, thanks." So everybody got lines that were indicative of whom they were.

And it was great working with Forry again, because I felt a little disappointed that his part was so trivial in DINOSAUR VALLEY GIRLS due to scheduling troubles. This was a chance for me to make it up to him and have him doing actual dialogue. It was a big thrill for me to be able to work with people like John Agar and William Smith as well, and of course I'd worked with Bib Bums before on amateur films and we were great friends—but, seeing them all together there, in one shot, it was really something. You know, back in the 1940s when DC Comics brought The Justice Society of America together, for the first time, and you saw all these characters—The Flash, Green Lantern and all these guys—sitting at a table together... well, that's what it looked like to me on VAMPIRE HUNTERS CLUB. The whole thing turned out to be a good experience for me.

VAMPIRE HUNTERS CLUB

[2001] Directed by Donald F. Glut; written by Buddy Barnett, Kathe Duba-Barnett and Edward L. Plumb, based on story by Edward L. Plumb; produced by Whitney Scott Boin, Buddy Barnett, Kathe Duba-Barnett and Edward L. Plumb.

FORREST J ACKERMAN Forry

the double-d avenger

Director William Winckler reminisced about Forry, the Russ Meyer girls and a truly unique film location.

—Jessie Lilley

THE DOUBLE-D AVENGER is a spoof of WONDER WOMAN about a costumed super woman who uses her giant super breasts to fight crime. It's the 25th year reunion movie of Russ Meyer's famous stars: Kitten Natividad from BENEATH THE VALLEY OF THE ULTRA-VIXENS, Haji from FASTER PUSSYCAT! KILL! KILL! and Raven De La Croix from UP. I always loved good old Forry and I had to squeeze him in some way, so I cast him as a demented, homy wax museum caretaker at The Movieland Wax Museum. He was surrounded by the Frankenstein monster—and he was conversing with the wax dummy, his character was that demented—and Dracula and The Mummy. So he was doddering around in there while the Double-D Avenger was battling with Haji's Super Stripper character.

It was actually a huge part for Forry. So often his characters were walk throughs, with a few notable exceptions, like THE TIME TRAVELERS. In fact, I think he had more lines in THE DOUBLE-D AVENGER. He had scenes with Kitten Natividad and with Boris Karloff's Frankenstein monster wax dummy! He spoke

scene in DDA which required a toilet plunger. After the scene was in the can, he said to me, "Bill, can I have this plunger prop?" And I thought, "Oh, my God! Forrest J Ackerman is going to take a prop from THE DOUBLE-D AVENGER and display it in the Ackermansion—along with Lugosi's ring and all that!" And I said, "Forry! I'd be delighted to have you display it as a prop!" And he said, "Well actually, I have a problem with my downstairs toilet and if you're done with it now..." Well, that took the wind out of me! I just love talking about this; it was such a wonderful time.

I miss Forry so much; there was no one else like him. I wish I could go visit the Ackermansion and experience that special feeling again.

THE DOUBLE-D AVENGER

(2001) Directed by William Winckler; written by William Winckler; produced by William Winckler.

FORREST J ACKERMAN Museum Caretaker

the creep

THE CREEP

(2001) Directed by Mark Del Rio; written by Darrell Doerger and Gory Wray.

FORREST J ACKERMAN The Host

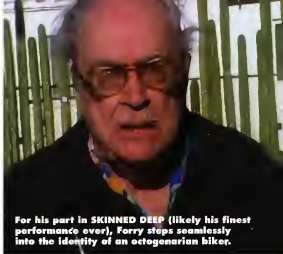
skinned deep

Director Gabe Bartalos had me in stitches as he talked about exploding heads and Forry as an outlaw biker dude.

—Jessie Lilley

I was about halfway through filming, and we had a film scripted where a motorcycle club called The Ancient Ones—it was made up of a bunch of seniors—appear at the end of the film, and wage war against the mutants in the story. A friend of mine, who was I believe working with Forrest J Ackerman called John Deall said to him, "Hey! You want to go to the set and maybe get a part?" He didn't tell me. It was a surprise, and I said, "Wow! It's Forrest Ackerman!"

I had met him a few times and it was fantastic. We had plenty of outfits with The Ancient Ones colors, and we put Forry in a leather jacket and we were able to get a great scene and blend him into the group. Now, the scene has all the seniors being taken out, and it's always a sensitive thing if you do a scene with seniors dying. They are all in the twilight of their lives anyway, and hopefully have



For his part in SKINNED DEEP (likely his finest performance ever), Forry steps seamlessly into the identity of an octogenarian biker.

enjoyed a great life, and all of them were so light-hearted about it, including Forry, who just wanted to go for it and have a lot of fun. So, since he was in a sense a surprise visitor that day, and we had a lot of the other peoples' heads explode, we wondered how we could do something fabulous for Forry—because it really was special for me to have him there.

So I decided to take care of it in post production and have him have a heart attack from the shock of everyone's heads exploding—all his comrades. My friend Bill Zahn, an effects artist out of San Francisco, did this incredible POV going into the body, through the ribcage, navigating past the organs and meeting the heart and then watching it detonate like a submarine under water. It was really theatrical and Forry had a great time hamming it up to what was exactly appropriate. And then he hung out for the rest of the day and watched the shooting.

It was really great. It was wonderful and also reestablished contact so we began to spend a little more time socially, and overlapping back and forth in social events and such. It was really cool.

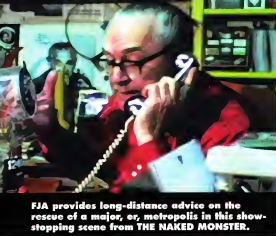
SKINNED DEEP

(2004) Directed by Gabriel Bartalos; written by Gabriel Bartalos; produced by Gabriel Bartalos.

FORREST J ACKERMAN Forry

the naked monster

Ted Newsom's love letter to American monster movies of the 1950s is never snarky, mean-spirited, or condescending. It also, by all probability, should never



FJA provides long-distance advice on the rescue of a major, er, metropolis in this show-stopping scene from *THE NAKED MONSTER*.

have been made.

Newsom himself has said that *THE NAKED MONSTER* "isn't a real film". But it is a real film, by every definition of the word; it just isn't a Hollywood film—and sometimes, it's pretty damn funny. Sometimes, even, it's a pretty good film. What other film can deliver to fans of 1950s sci-fi Kenneth Tobey, John Agar, Robert Cornthwaite, Gloria Talbot, Les Tremayne, Robert Clarke, Lori Nelson, Paul Marco and Ann Robinson, on one ram-shackle platter of satirical goodness? And eagle-eyed viewers can play spot-the-celebrity and try and catch cameos of baby-faced folks like Daniel Roebuck, Michelle Bauer and J.R. Bookwalter. Not enough? Then be on the lookout for Bob Burns, Del Howison and Forry Ackerman among others.

The probability that it should never have been made, or, more accurately, should never have been completed, lies in its tortured and difficult production history.

Ted Newsom, knowing Kenneth Tobey (of *THE THING*, *IT CAME FROM BENEATH THE SEA* and *BEAST FROM 20,000 FATHOMS* fame) from interviewing him for a monster mag, swore that he'd put Tobey in a film of his own one day. That day started in 1984 when Newsom, along with co-director Wayne Berwick, took Berwick's Super 8mm camera (yes—Super 8mm!) and began shooting Newsom's 20-odd page script. For multiple reasons, the film was not completed, and Newsom and Berwick picked up production a full ten years later. More material was shot, but again, completion was elusive, and the film sat on Newsom's shelf. Finally, in the 21st Century, with all the digital tools at his disposal to actually finish the film and lift a twenty-some-year-old albatross from off his neck, Newsom finished cutting, looping and scoring the picture (with library music) and released it on

DVD in 2005.

Watching Ted Newsom's *THE NAKED MONSTER* today is what it must have been like to see a Bill Rebane or Larry Buchanan film at the Drive-In in the 1970's on its first release, except that you know everybody involved are in on the joke. (And let's face it; if you have to look up Rebane or Buchanan, chances are that you won't get Newsom's film at all.)

But you will "get it" if you're a fan of 1950s American monster movies. When *THE NAKED MONSTER* works well, it works very well, and the comedy can be laugh-out loud funny. All of the 50s icons featured in the film play straight and true, knowing that the humor works only when played dead straight, and never for camp. It's a joy to see this collection of fifties sci-fi faces together under one big top.

Brinke Stevens, as Dr. Nikki Carlton, stars in one of her first screen roles. She is a revelation, and one wishes that her work in this film could've been seen when it was done and not twenty years later. Prior to *THE NAKED MONSTER*, Stevens had some success with bit roles and extra work, and then she moved into the glory days of the 1980s "Scream Queen" phenomenon. In Newsom's film, her beauty is certainly on display, but so is Stevens' undeniable, solid screen presence and her gift for comedy. *THE NAKED MONSTER* can be boiled down in description as a "black-out" sketch comedy film, like *AIRPLANE* or the TV series *POLICE SQUAD*. Its charms lay with its collection of 50s icons, Brinke Stevens and a giant rubber monster suit, so goofy and wonderful that one wishes the filmmakers massed produced it as a paper mache piñata for fan consumption, collecting and hitting with a stick.

Strangely, where the film also charms is where it fails. It took over twenty years to make and highlights influences that have come and gone. On the surface, *THE NAKED MONSTER* makes one nostalgic for the innocent giant monster movies of the fifties, even if one wasn't yet around to enjoy the originals at the Drive-In. Shot on Super 8mm film; the picture often resembles one of those crudely lensed Bill Rebane fright films of the 1970s like *THE GIANT SPIDER INVASION* (1975). Lastly, born in the age of the "Scream Queen"/pop-your top 1980s, *THE NAKED MONSTER* also has a solid touch of the Fred Olen Ray school of humor. Just who is the audience for *THE NAKED MONSTER*? Folks who love all of the above, that's who. And that's its greatest charm.

— Mark Redfield

THE NAKED MONSTER

(2005) Directed by Wayne Berwick and Ted Newsom; written by Ted Newsom; produced by Michael A. Baron, Ted Newsom, Kathryn Powers, Kent Rossmussen and Michael Shaw.

FORREST J ACKERMAN Flustered Man

the scorned

THE SCORNE

(2005) Directed by Robert Kubilos; written by Rob Cesternino, Eric Mittleman and Scott Zakarin; produced by Paul J. Rob Cesternino, Richard Morfinez, Eric Mittleman, Pablo Moreno, Sadie Shiller, Josh Souza, Rich Teckenberg, Van Vandegrift and Scott Zakarin.

FORREST J ACKERMAN Man in Wheelchair

the boneyard collection

Producer and Director Edward L. Plumb interrupted his dinner plans to take a call and remember working with Forry on one of his two recent films.

— Jessie Lilley

Forry is the host of **THE BONEYARD COLLECTION** along with two pretty girls, and he introduces the four vignettes. He is the glue that holds the stories together. His character is Dr. Acula, and, if you've met Forry, you'll see that his lines were written by L.J. Dopp and me, to capture his personality on screen.

Forry, as Dr. Acula, certainly camps it up as he introduces the various gallows humor comedies in the anthology. The segments include vampires, a mummy, werewolves, ghost and witches—*and the devil shows up in the person of Brad Dourif in THE DEVIL'S DUE AT MIDNIGHT.* It has pretty witches, Dourif as the devil, Susan Tyrrell came in and played a high priestess, Ken Force comes in as a witch killer and last, but not least, we had George Kennedy come in as an expert on withes.

I wrote this one and **BOOGIE WITH THE UNDEAD** which is the zombie story and L.J. Dopp wrote **CRY OF THE MUMMY** which is, obviously, the mummy story. I also wrote **HER MORBID DESIRES** which is based on a short story by Brad Linawcaver and that's the vampire story. It's the same story Brad wrote, just transferred to film with minor changes. Other than this one, all the episodes are original.

So, Forry came in and we wondered if we'd need cue cards, but he had all his lines down and he did a great job. He needed no prompting and was really into the character. It seems he had a lot of fun! Forry was 89 when he did

this part and we had waited for him while he was out of commission for awhile due to surgery. He was just fantastic and well worth the wait!

It was a fun film to make and it was screened at Cannes this year (2010) so it's hopefully going to go around the world as well as here in the States.

THE BONEYARD COLLECTION

(2006) Directed by Edward L. Plumb; written by L. J. Dopp and Edward L. Plumb; produced by L. J. Dopp, Damian Edwards and Edward L. Plumb.

FORREST J ACKERMAN Dr. Acula

scarlet moon

I enjoyed chatting with director Warren Disbrow, and hearing his impressions of Forry Ackerman's influence on him over the years.

— Jessie Lilley

I always credit Forry Ackerman and his **FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND** as one of my inspirations to make horror movies. I met Forry a couple of times at conventions and when we were filming **SCARLET MOON**, I ran into him again and asked if he would kindly appear in that movie. He was wonderful to work with and even did a 10 or 15 minute interview for the DVD.

Forry was very special to fans of horror, sci-if and fantasy; **FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND**, starting back in 1958, gave kids who loved monster movies a place where they could relate to others like themselves. Forry was an adult who understood the magic in these movies that attracted the kids because he sincerely loved the movies too. I was one of the kids Forry did the magazine for. There will never be another Forry J. Ackerman. He's sorely missed.

SCARLET MOON was a modern vampire film which dealt with the inter-relationships of various supernaturals as they competed with each other to find a large red diamond called The Scarlet Moon. Whoever owned The Scarlet Moon could gain the power to rule the earth. The movie is a dark comedy and is available from Troma on DVD.

Forry played a high government official who gives orders to a scientist to investigate what the supernatural beings are up to. Directing him was very easy. He learned the script fast and delivered his lines perfectly. He was very good natured and professional and the cast and crew loved working with him.

I have a picture of Forry with my father, Warren Disbrow, Sr., who played Professor Hertz, the man who Forry gave orders to in the film. My father has appeared in several movies himself but has always looked back fondly on working with Forry.

SCARLET MOON

(2006) Directed by Warren F. Disbrow; written by Warren F. Disbrow; produced by Dominic Gregorio.

FORREST J ACKERMAN The General

the dead undead

Almost the last film appearance by Forrest J Ackerman, producer Edward L. Plumb recalls:

— Jessie Lilley

I put Forry in his next to last film, called **THE DEAD UNDEAD**. I produced that zombie film and what he did here was roar. There's no dialogue, he's in a wheelchair as the last zombie standing (or wheeling) and roars and ends us burning up in a fire. So this is a special cameo only, but as usual, it was great fun to have him around. As it turns out, this was almost his final performance. He would only appear in one more film.

THE DEAD UNDEAD

(2009) Directed by Matthew R. Anderson and Edward Conna; written by Edward Conna; produced by Matthew R. Anderson, Brad Bovee, Nick Brett, David R. Conna, Edward Conna, Edward Conna, Bill Davis, Bruce Liebovitch, Ken Locsmandi, Jon Myers, Angela Plasschaert and Edward L. Plumb.

FORREST J ACKERMAN Wheelchair ZomVamp

red velvet

Writer and long-time Forry nephew Joe Moe took a few minutes from an ever-busier schedule to talk about his work on RED VELVET and his favorite uncle.

— Jessie Lilley

RED-VELVET was the first feature that I actually was in charge of. When I say "in charge", I mean I had my hands in all the parts of production that I'd trained to do. I rewrote the screenplay from an original script by a young writer named Anthony Burns. It came to me as a straight-ahead slasher film, but my producers and I wanted to create an antidote to the torture porn that's out there and also give a nod to some of the more classic horror sensibilities; really bold colors and more

fantastical and surreal elements.

The second thing I got to do was more or less design the film. So it was a big step up for me to sort of production design the film with my best friend from high school and FM reader John Goss, who was my Art Director.

And my producer was also my **FAMOUS MONSTERS** best pal from Hawaii who used to ride bikes with me in the 70s to go pick up our issues of FM when we were teenagers, Sean Fernald. We were all working together and making this dream come true; of course we wanted Forry to be in it!

We went into production about two years before Forry moved on to Never Never Land with Prince Sirki—he was infirm but still sharp as a tack mentally, as he was right to the end. He wanted to participate, so we wrote in a cameo for him to appear in a Thai restaurant scene, drinking an iced coffee and looking serene and Forry-like in his blue aloha shirt.

Everybody on the set was a Forry fan. It was a horror movie with a reasonable budget, so we had good production values. The cinematographer, Jim Dickson had shot everything from Tron to the "Star Gate sequence" for Kubrick's 2001! He's an incredible cinematographer and made everybody look beautiful — and Forry was no exception. You only see a glimpse of him, but he's sitting there in the outdoor patio with Rhonda Wong, mother of 18-year-old makeup artist Casey Wong who was one of Forry's final proteges. Forry called him "Casey at the Bat" — the Vampire Bat!

John Goss, Sean Fernald and I had a real vision to pay homage to the look of an old Dario Argento film. Director Bruce Dickson executed that style with loveliness. So, not only was I able to write visual markers into the script, to try and clue in the team, but as producer I got to coordinate the creative departments. I had a dream relationship with my great key special makeup effects artist Kevin Kirkpatrick, an amazing talent. He and the entire Motion Picture FX team were a horror fans fantasy resource. Young Casey Wong got his first FX screen credit on Red Velvet AND his SAG card! He also got covered in blood and gore.

So, wonder of wonders, just recently we received a letter from Dario Argento, the maestro himself! He said he thought **RED VELVET** was a really great movie and he hoped to meet us someday! That was gigantic validation and it's absolutely going on the DVD cover! Maybe that's ALL that'll go on the DVD cover? "Dario Argento says bravo!"

RED VELVET

[2009] Directed by Bruce Dickson; written by Anthony Burns and Joe Moe, based on story by Anthony Burns; produced by Ari Citok, Sean Fennell, Paul Giffin, Jim McConville, "Johnny Mac" Justin McConville, Nicole McConville, Eric Mittleman and Joe Moe.

FORREST J ACKERMAN Himself

sons of dr.acula or how i went from watching to being involved in ackerman films

Florida was a good place to be in the Golden Age of the Drive-in. I made it through the sixties and the early part of the seventies because my insatiable appetite for weird films could be satisfied in a world yet to see videotapes or DVDs. Late night TV helped. Campus film series helped. But there was no substitute for all those drive-ins, peck marking the state of Florida, something like the skin condition of fandom in those days.

So came the time when friends and I drove off into the humid night so we could see *QUEEN OF BLOOD* starring Forrest J Ackerman. You may think that film starred Basil Rathbone, Dennis Hopper, John Saxon, Judith Meredith and Florence Marly (in the title role). This is an entirely forgivable mistake. However, readers of *FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND* had been trained ever since *THE TIME TRAVELERS* to be on the lookout for movies in which our hero stood in for every fan who dreamed of appearing in a sci-fi monster flick.

Did we care if he was a character or himself in the films? No. What mattered was that he was in them. Look! It's Forry in *THE HOWLING*. Gosh! It's Forry in *INNOCENT BLOOD*. Wow! It's Forry as our glorious leader in *AMAZON WOMEN ON THE MOON*.

The night I stared at five blood films (films with the word "blood" in the title), the highlight was Forry as Rathbone's assistant in the last shot where he is holding a tray of gooey, pulsing, alien vampire eggs. The only sound was static from the cheap speaker hanging on the car window.

Some years later, when I first met Forry at a science fiction convention in Texas, I told him that my only disappointment with *QUEEN OF BLOOD* was that he didn't have an appropriate closing line as he held the tray. He should have said, "It's EGGeiting."

My lame attempt at humor was worthy of my hero—or at least Vincent Price on the TV *Batman* series. Over the years, I would have the opportunity of writing for and with Ackerman on many occasions. Much later, when I met Curtis Harrington at one of the FJA birthday events I told the director of *QUEEN OF BLOOD* of my first encounter with the Ackermanmonster. The distinguished filmmaker at least pretended to be amused.

It was one thing to marvel at these movies but quite another to be a participant. Little did I know that one day Fred Olen Ray would afford me the opportunity of actually appearing in a film in which Forry would don the Dracula cape, once worn by Bela Lugosi, and appear as Count Dracula, himself. Roger Corman distributed Fred's film, *ATTACK OF THE 60 FOOT CENTERFOLD*, to the acclaim of fans of every gender. I appear as Running Guy in this cinematic milestone. I even have dialog as I scurry about in an attempt to avoid trampling by giant centerfolds, an apt Hollywood metaphor. In this truly amazing film, Fred cut it so that the Cinema Collectors store on Wilcox (gone but not forgotten) appeared to be on Hollywood Blvd near the Hollywood Wax Museum. *CULT MOVIES* and the new version of Forry's *SPACEMEN* were published out of this very store.

How appropriate that Forry is a wax figure of Count Dracula coming to life at the approach of really big T and A. Jim Wynorski is the herald of the pulchritude. Yes, it's that kind of film.

After *CENTERFOLD*, there were two other times I had a connection to FJA and the moving picture show. Remember the talking werewolf in *RETURN OF THE VAMPIRE*? Usually werewolves don't talk. But I was a loquacious Lycanthrope in *THE VAMPIRE HUNTERS CLUB*. Forry was one of the vampire hunters, along with Bob Burns, Dave Donham, William Smith and John Agar in his last role. The producer was Edward L. Plumb who put together a remarkable cast for this mini-epic.

It didn't seem possible that Ed would ever pull off something like that again; but he surpassed himself and gathered together an even more notable cast for *THE BONEYARD COLLECTION* which he co-produced with L.J. Dopp. The number of Hollywood veterans who appear in these two films could populate a Transylvanian village.

film hosted by Forry, again wearing the Lugosi cape. However, this time FJA appeared as his own creation of Dr. Acula, a character he'd developed early in his career. When he was the agent for the immortal Ed Wood there was the possibility of Bela appearing as Forry's creation in a proposed TV series by Wood that never came off. So Forry is the only performer to appear in film as both Dracula and Dr. Acula.

My connection to Forry's role in the film was that he talked about me as the writer of one of the original stories. Returning to the drive-in inside my fevered brain, my childhood self heard Forry saying my name in an accent touched by the long shadow of Lugosi. L.J. Dopp's production design on the crypt and the throne from which Forry held forth suited the mood perfectly.

There was one earlier point of contact between Dr. Acula and myself. I had scripted him in his well worn role as the host of audio dramas on National Public Radio for the HORROR HOUSE series in 1993. Producer Berl Boykin made sure that one of the shows was my adaptation of two combined stories by

Edgar Allan Poe: BERENICE and THE IMP OF THE PERVERSE.

Now, thanks to Ed Plumb, Dr. Acula introduced my story, HER MORBID DESIRES adapted by Plumb for THE BONEYARD COLLECTION.

Wheels within wheels! Movie makers named Ed! Writers named Edgar!

There is only one thing to say: "It's exciting."

— Brad Linaweaver

Brad Linaweaver is an award winning science fiction author. He has original story credits on JACK-O, SPACEBABES MEET THE MONSTERS, THE BRAIN LEECHES, and HER MORBID DESIRES, a segment of THE BONEYARD COLLECTION. He has written for FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND, CULT MOVIES, SPACEMEN, FEMME FATALES, FILMFAK, WORLDLY REMAINS and MONDO CULT.





Ferry on the set of RED VELVET for his final cameo. Was it his finest? You know what, they ALL were. Every time he got in front of a camera, we knew he was bringing us all along with him. Thanks for never losing your love for the movies, Uncle Ferry!

Photo credit: Lucky Smith

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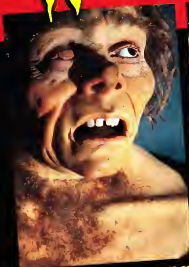
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